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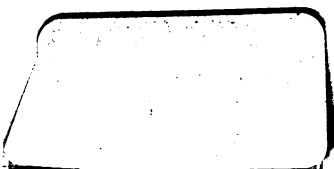
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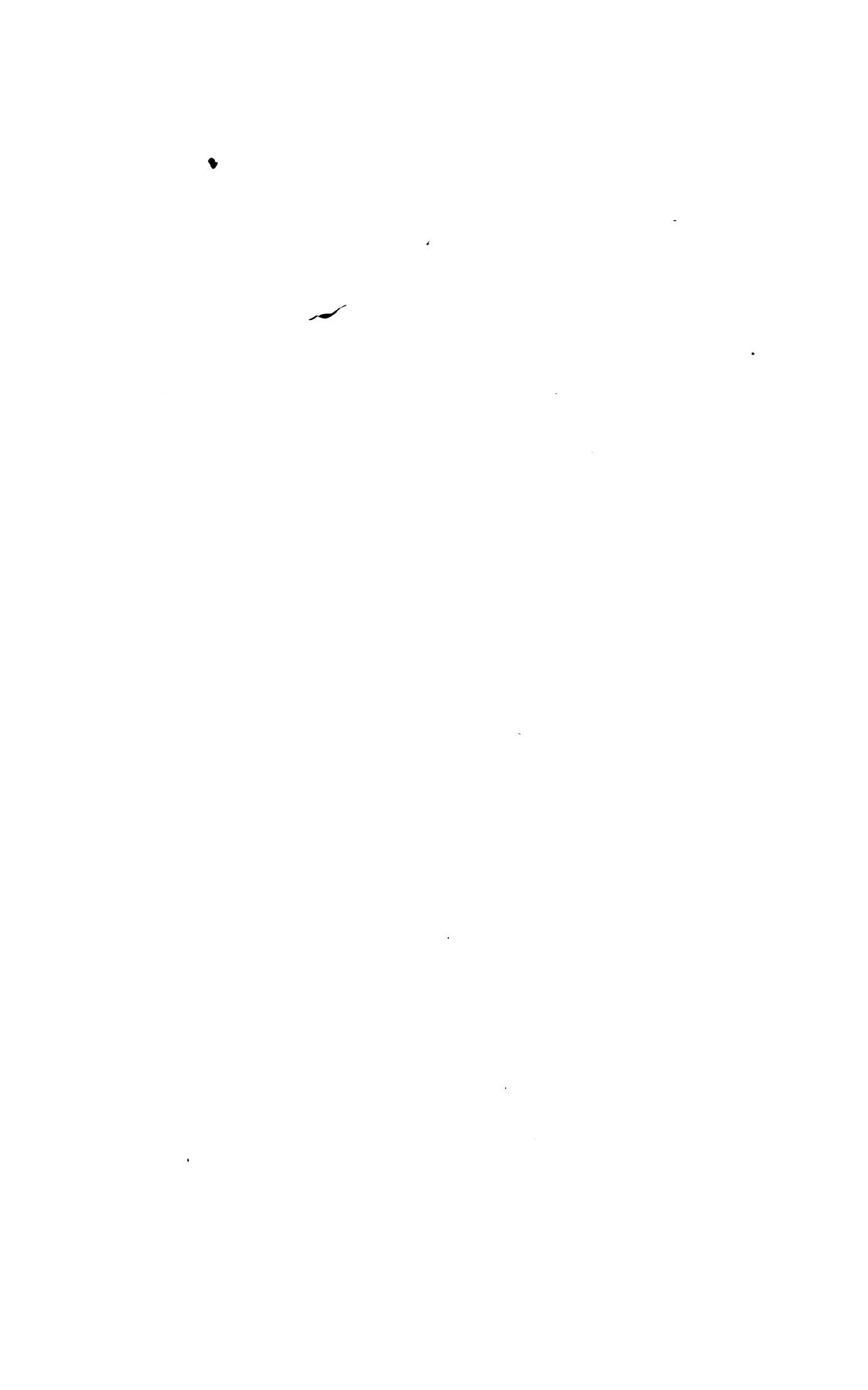
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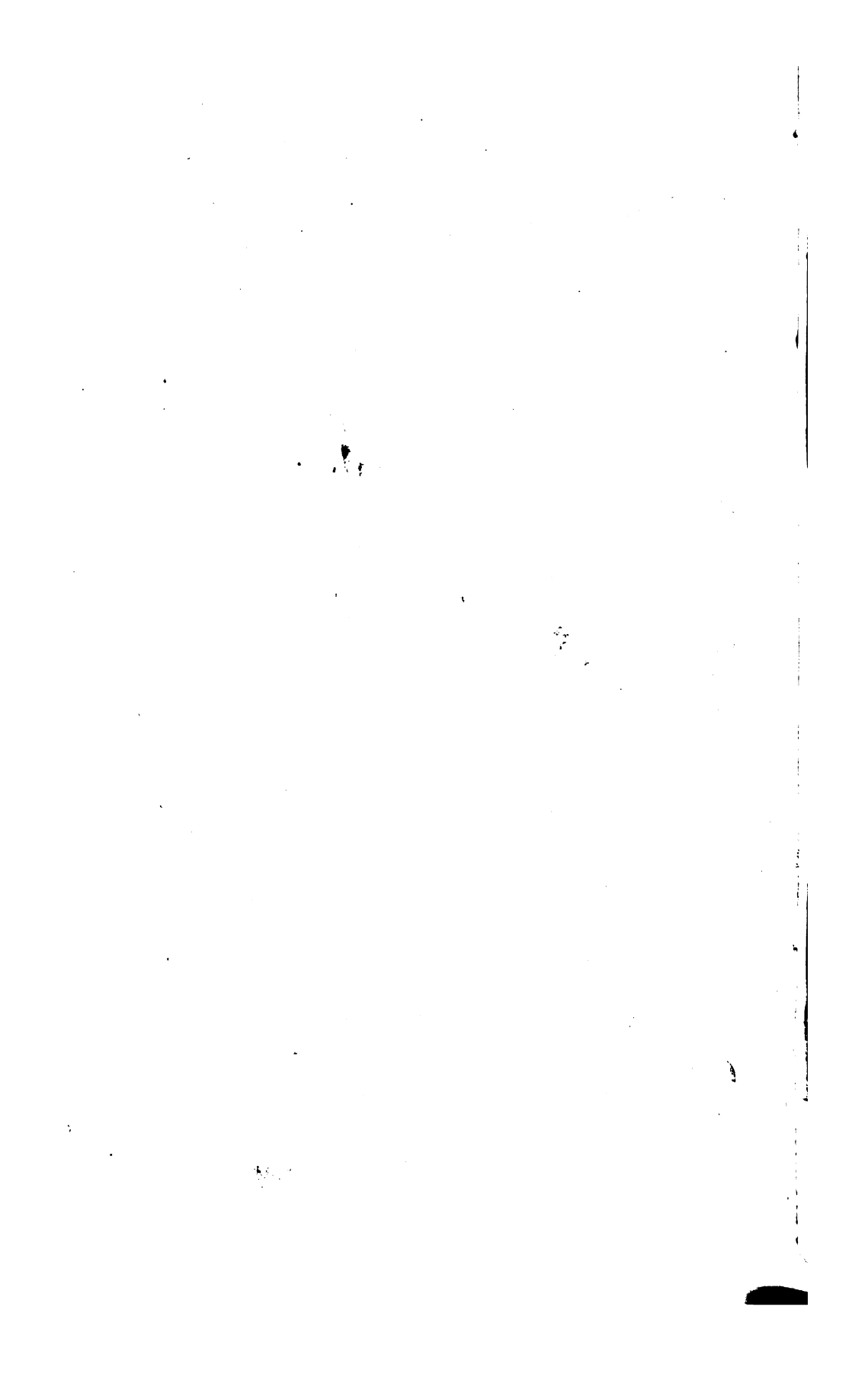
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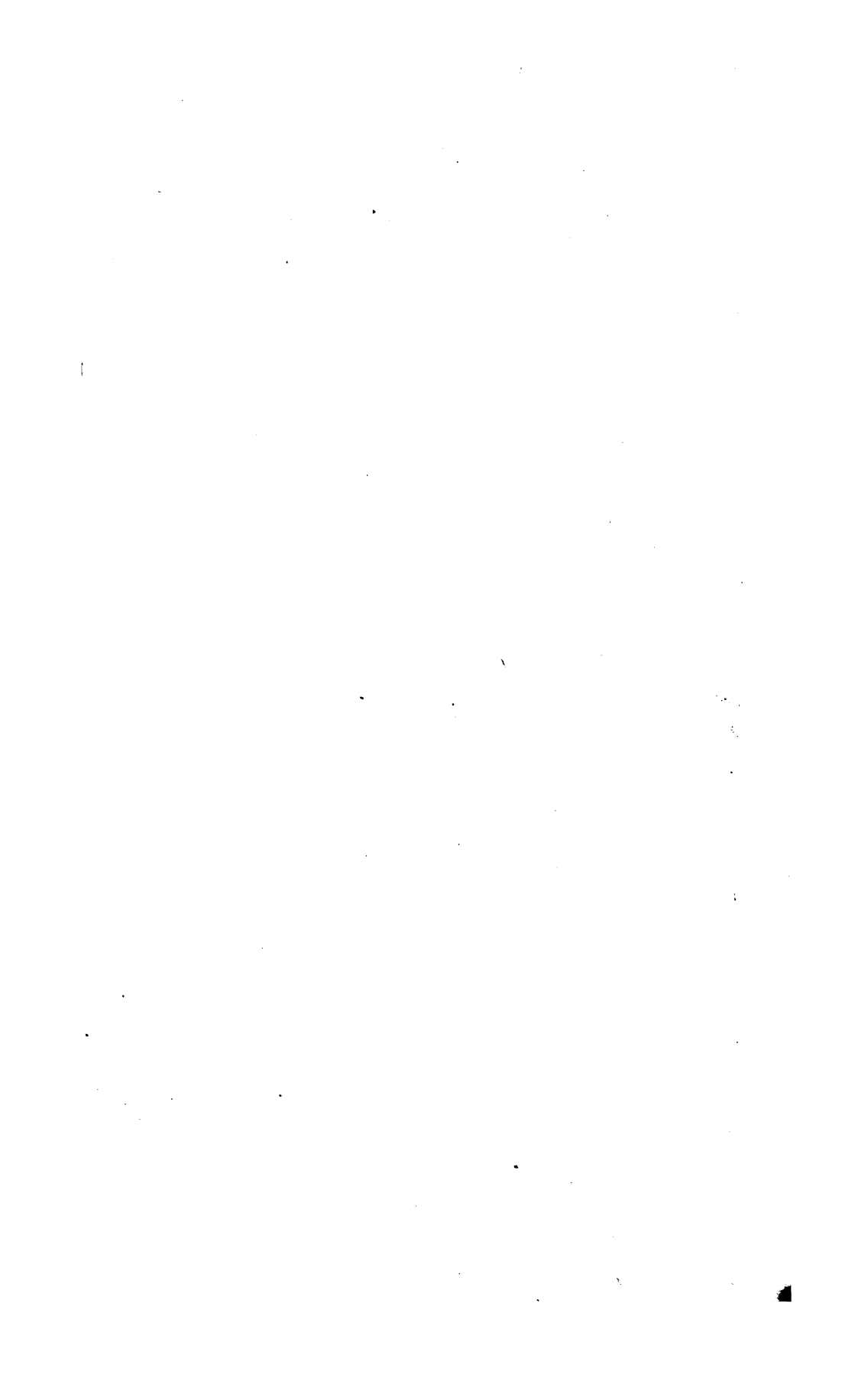
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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

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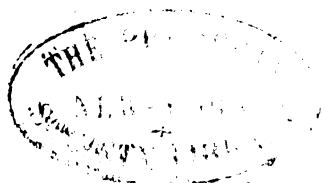
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A NOVEL.



By

Mrs. F. E. G. Brock.

"We are at school: through this strange life of ours,
We pass, like children through their teaching-time;
Training in lowly trust our highest powers,
Learning by common things truths most sublime."

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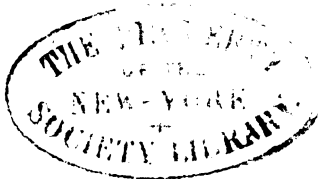
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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!"
JOHN MILTON.

THE Rector of Eversfield was dead.

Five-and-twenty years he had labored among his people—had wrestled for them in prayer—had preached, to the best of his ability, God's Truth, standing Sunday by Sunday in the same place.

He had known sorrow in the course of those years; and he had lived it down. He had known the sting of calumny; and he had lived that calumny down. And joy, in sweetness and in fulness, had arisen upon him; and had faded. Now all alike was blended into a dream. The book was closed. "After life's fitful fever, he slept well."

It was the day but one preceding the funeral. A chilly November day—sleet falling at intervals—the wind moaning dismally, as it swept the last leaves from the rectory trees. Dismally, likewise, the same wind moaned within the house; through and about the closed blinds, up and down the narrow staircase, and the passage to which that staircase led—a passage ending in two doors, set side by side.

The first of these two doors enclosed the chamber in which the coffin, with its silent burden, awaited the final change. The other opened into a pretty room, daintily furnished, where a glimmering upon white curtains, upon chintz draperies, upon a little writing-table in knick-nacks, upon books, scrolls, pictures, upon the face of a young girl.

The girl lay stretched upon the bed. Her eyes were closed; her eyebrows slightly contracted, as in pain. She was not beautiful; she was not, critically speaking, pretty; but she had

soft brown hair, a delicate profile, a sweet mouth, a fair, blue-veined complexion. She appeared to be about eighteen or, at the utmost, nineteen years of age.

"I fancy she is half unconscious," whispered a voice at the door.

Two ladies, walking noiselessly, had entered. One, rubicund, portly, and a little vulgar, led the way, with the manner of a person who feels herself quite at home. The other, short, small, refined, was evidently a stranger. Her dress, a travelling-dress, was somewhat dusty, as though fresh from the railroad; and the expression with which she looked toward the bed spoke much of curiosity, more of anxiety, but nothing of recognition.

"My dear!" said the rubicund lady, softly; "Gabrielle!"

The girl opened her eyes.

"Your cousin has come to say 'How do you do?'"

"My cousin?"

"Your cousin Miss Gordon, love."

"Oh!"

She sat up, looking uncertainly round, her hand half extended. Miss Gordon advanced and took the hand within her own.

"You are—let me think—are you Marian?"

"No, I am Olivia, the eldest of all. You know my name?"

"Yes, well," said Gabrielle, dreamily; "it was kind in you to come."

"I could not have borne to stay away. You must let me help you, so far as lies in my power."

"Thank you, I want no help—I am only tired."

"You are not very well, my child?"

"Not very."

"Does your head ache?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. You had better lie down again."

"Perhaps I had."

She lay down as she spoke, and turned her face away. For just now she was alive only to one awful fact: that her father—not her father only, but her friend, her mother, her all—was gone away, out of her reach, out of her world; to one strong desire: that death might speedily take her, as, where, it had taken him.

Olivia stood for some minutes, silently watching—so deep in thought that, when her companion touched her elbow, she started as though aroused from a dream.

"I think we may as well go down-stairs," whispered the rubicund lady; "she's better alone, Miss Gordon—better alone."

CHAPTER II.

"I have not looked upon you nigh,
Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep,
Great Nature is more wise than I:
I will not tell you not to weep."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE drawing-room, although small, was pretty and comfortable; but it was lonely, with the loneliness of death. Beside the fire stood a large arm-chair, to which the rubicund lady pointed.

"That was the poor rector's special chair," said she, sighing—unable, nevertheless, to conceal her delight in the office of cicerone among scenes so mournful; "in that very chair, Miss Gordon, was he sitting when the stroke took him."

"The stroke was totally unexpected, I fear?"

"Ah! deary me, yes; he had seemed every bit as well as usual. I had met him in the village in the afternoon—him and Gabrielle; and afterward they had come home, and had their teas, and were sitting, like they sat most evenings, by the fire: Gabrielle on that footstool, Miss Gordon, and the poor rector, as I said, in the chair."

"Yes?"

"He dozed off—so Gabrielle tells me—being tired. Presently she noticed something peculiar in his breathing; looked up, and saw a change. Some girls would have screeched; but screechings are not in Gabrielle's way. She only just rose from her seat, and walked into the kitchen, and asked the cook to please come and look at her papa, for he didn't seem well. So cook came, and saw in a minute how it was—she lost her own mother by a stroke."

"He did not die that evening?"

"No; they sent for Mr. Barber, my 'usband who brought him so far round that he opened eyes and seemed to know us. And he lay all night through, holding Gabrielle's hand, and looking, looking at her. Until, of a sudden, to-morrow, he said, 'My darling!'—and then, 'God bless you!'—and died."

"Poor Gabrielle!"

"Ah! you may well say that. She is one with whom all things go very deep; it has been so from her childhood. And she was quite wrapped up in her father. To tell you the truth, Mr. Barber fears serious consequences, if she continue in her present state. I 'ope, though, she will revive under your influence, Miss Gordon, as she gets to know you better."

"I regret exceedingly," replied Miss Gordon, "that we are such strangers to her. But we have always failed in persuading Mr. Wynn to come and see us at Farnley. He could not bring his mind to undertake so long a journey from his parish; much less to send Gabrielle alone."

"She has never been anywhere alone, poor child! It is a singular coincidence; but, only last week, when the poor rector and my 'usband were talking—the rector as well, to all appearance, as you or I—'Barber,' he said, 'If ever any thing should happen to me,' he said, 'write to my cousins in Yorkshire—Mr. and Miss Gordon. They are almost the only relatives I have, this side the grave.' So when the melancholy event occurred, my 'usband knew what to do. And most kind it is of you, I'm sure, to respond thus promptly."

"I could not have borne to stay away," Olivia repeated; "Mr. Gordon will follow me to-morrow. I suppose there is a room which he—"

"Can 'ave? Oh, certainly. Mr. Godfrey's room, just as he left it. I will give orders."

"Mr. Godfrey's room!" exclaimed Olivia. "Who is Mr. Godfrey?"

Mrs. Barber was about to answer; and had fact begun, with a "What, Miss Gordon! you have never heard of Mr. Godfrey?"—when the conversation was interrupted by the house-keeper who came to say, that Mr. Barber and his wife were at the door, that he could not wait, a minute if Mrs. Barber wished to go home with any child should thank her to make haste.

"Perraps, then, you'll excuse me, Miss Gordon," said the rubicund lady, rising; "I'll return shortly, and to stay the night; but first just have a peep at my children first, and Mr. Barber's supper. Please to make as n

comfortable, and to ring for any thing that you may want. It quite shocks me to leave you alone!"

"Thank you—I am used to being alone," said Olivia, smiling.

"Jane is very attentive; and I do 'ope you'll make a good tea. You must want it, I'm sure, after your journey."

With a profound bow, Mrs. Barber departed; and the wheels of the gig were soon heard to die away in the distance.

Olivia seated herself beside the fire, and presently fell into a fit of musing; of which, at first, the young orphan up-stairs formed the absorbing theme. Ere long, however, she found her fancy hovering around that unknown Mr. Godfrey, mentioned with such familiarity by Mrs. Barber. He appeared to be one of the household; yet Gabrielle had no brother: and Olivia knew that Mr. Wynn had kept neither curate nor pupil. It was probable, she thought, that this Mr. Godfrey had been a personal friend of the rector's; perhaps they had been at college together, or even at school. He must, then, be an elderly man—most likely an elderly bachelor; who, having no near ties of his own, regarded the peaceful little rectory as a home; resorting thither so often, for refreshment and for rest, that one room had been exclusively devoted to his use, and called by his name.

Pondering these things, Olivia beheld, in a vision, a gray-haired personage—a little bald, and a little infirm, and a second father to Gabrielle. When she went from the drawing-room to the dining-room, to partake of the "severe tea," she looked all round the little hall; expecting to see on some hook a hat, or in some corner a stick, which must undoubtedly be known as the property of Mr. Godfrey. But in this she was disappointed; for—barring a chair or two—the hall was empty.

She had returned, her solitary meal concluded, to the drawing-room fire; when the silence that enfolded the house was broken by a sudden bell. The next moment, she heard the house-maid hurrying to the door; and, in an impatient manner, remove the chain.

"Surely James cannot have changed his mind," thought Olivia, "and have followed me to-day?"

She opened the drawing-room door a little way, and listened.

"No! that is not James's voice."

"Well, Jane!"

"Oh, Mr. Godfrey, sir! we didn't expect you till Thursday. And your room is bespoken for

another gentleman! But, if you wouldn't mind the poor master's dressing-room, sir—"

"Hush, Jane, don't hurry on so fast; I shall sleep at the inn. How is Miss Gabrielle?"

"Oh, sir! Miss Gabrielle's in a sad way; but it will do her good to see you. If you'll please to walk into the drawing-room, sir, I'll tell her."

"No, stop—she mustn't be disturbed, Jane—"

But the eager damsel was already beyond earshot; and Mr. Godfrey did walk into the drawing-room.

Olivia was awaiting him, well pleased. It would be such a relief to talk things over with this kind old man!—to hear his advice concerning Gabrielle, his views about her disposition, and so forth. She looked expectantly toward the door, and saw—a fair-haired youth of middle height, with blue eyes, an open countenance, and an incipient mustache. On perceiving Olivia, he stopped short; while she, in her utter astonishment, neither spoke nor moved.

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing and coloring: "I was not aware—My dear Gabrielle!"

For, suddenly, Gabrielle stood at his elbow. She seemed hardly the same girl whom Olivia had seen so listless, so almost lifeless. Her cheeks were flushed; her hands trembled with eagerness—and, as the young man took them between his own, she burst into a passion of tears.

Olivia would have retired; but they were standing before the door. She saw, however, that her presence was forgotten.

"Oh, Charlie—it is hard; it is more than I can bear—"

"He is happy.—Think of that," the young man answered, very gently.

"Yes; he is happy . . . and I am selfish. But I can't help it, Charlie."

"I know—of course—don't try to help it, dear."

"He said—do you remember?—he said that he must have you at Christmas, to help with the carols—"

Then there was a silence; broken only by the subdued sound of her weeping.

"Gabrielle—come and sit down," murmured the young man, at last; "you are too weak to stand."

He passed his arm half round her waist, and drew her to the sofa; and Olivia, seizing the opportunity, stole away. She went back to the dining-room, and sat bewildered—how long, she did not know. It might have been ten minutes—it might have been fifty; it was all the same to Olivia.

Her presence of mind was gradually returning, when a second peal rang through the house; followed by a shriek and a confusion, and a summons from Jane. Would Miss Gordon please to come? Miss Gabrielle was dying!

Gabrielle was not dying; but she lay unconscious and colorless—exhausted, so Olivia believed, by that paroxysm of tears.

Mr. Godfrey carried her up-stairs, and at length she opened her eyes; soon, however—as Jane expressed it—to “go off again.” One fainting-fit followed another, in rapid succession; and Olivia began to grow exceedingly anxious. It was a deep relief, toward nine o’clock, to hear Mrs. Barber’s voice.

“I see ’ow it is,” said the rubicund lady; “Gabrielle’s in for an illness. And a severe one. We must send for my ’usband.”

“If you please, ma’am,” whispered Jane, approaching with a confidential air—“Mr. Godfrey wants to know if Miss Gabrielle is any better.”

“Mr. Godfrey! Ah, poor fellow! I saw him walking up and down in the church-yard. I dare say, now, Mr. Godfrey would run and fetch my ’usband.”

“I will ask him,” said Olivia.

He was standing at the foot of the stairs.

“Is she better? Can I be of any use?” he asked, in one breath.

“Thank you. Mr. Barber—” began Olivia; but she got no further.

“I will fetch him. He shall be here as soon as possible,” the young man said; snatched up his hat, and was gone.

Olivia smiled, despite her anxiety, and took an early opportunity of questioning Mrs. Barber as to whom this Mr. Godfrey might be.

“He comes of a good family, Miss Gordon. He lived at the Grange, with Lady Godfrey, his grandma. As children, he and Gabrielle were always together—morning, noon, and night; and he was a mighty favorite with the rector. Since Lady Godfrey died, and the Grange was shut up, he has been here regularly, every vacation. What he will do now, and what Gabrielle will do without him, I can’t tell, poor things, I’m sure.”

The rubicund lady smiled, as she spoke; and looked, in Olivia’s eyes, full of significance. But Olivia was at once too cautious and too well-bred to seek further information from Mrs. Barber. She preferred to supply it, for the present, from her own mind.

“Poor child! Poor Gabrielle!” she thought. “I feel happier about her now. Though who would have expected Mr. Godfrey to be so young

a man? Still, as he is—and as Mr. Wynn seems to have countenanced him—only I hope his prospects are tolerable.”

Olivia’s suspicions were encouraged, and, in her own opinion, certified, when, happening to open a book which lay on Gabrielle’s table, she read the following words:

“*Gabrielle Wynn,*

From her true knight,

Charles Richard Godfrey.”

“A settled thing, I perceive,” said Olivia, closing the book, with decision. “Not a positive engagement as yet, or Mrs. Barber would surely have mentioned it. But an understanding—a settled understanding. What a comfort!”

Olivia sat herself down, and mused once more.

CHAPTER III.

“Within my breast there is no light,
But the cold light of stars;
I give the first watch of the night
To the red planet Mars.

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.”

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

FARNLEY, the country-seat of the house of Gordon, was situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the beautiful West Riding. Round about it, far as the eye could reach, lay the accompanying property—woods, villages, wind-mills, pasture-land, with here and there—only here and there—a coal-pit; and, northward, a boundary of moorland, dim and blue.

The owner of this goodly heritage, James Fortescue Gordon, had succeeded to it at the age of thirteen. His parents had died within a few months of one another, leaving, besides himself, four daughters—Olivia, Annie, Marian, and Cicely. Olivia was considerably the eldest. Between her own birth and that of Annie, a long succession of infant lives had dawned and set. Thus she had ever been less a sister than a mother to the children who remained; and, at the time when our story opens, had long regarded herself as an established old maid. Annie had married early, and had settled in a southern county. The younger girls might, sooner or later, be expected to follow in her steps; and Olivia joyfully anticipated a life-long tête-à-tête with James. For she felt sure that James would never marry—he was not of a marrying disposition.

Olivia worshipped this brother. Twelve years his senior, she yet leaned on him, as a wife leans on her husband—looked up to him, as a daughter looks up to her father. His faults were virtues in her eyes; his virtues were works of supererogation. As to his talents—they would have been remarkable in a demi-god! And James Gordon was, without doubt, singularly talented. A short time back, his name had been in every mouth, as, by an unusual majority, senior wrangler and first Smith's prizeman of his year. The career thus brilliantly begun, promised to continue brilliantly. Since leaving Cambridge, he had devoted considerable time to the cultivation of his intellectual powers, had read much, had thought more, and had written a little. That little had already, in the judgment of competent critics, promoted him to no mean place among the higher order of authors.

And already, to his own neighborhood, he was as much a lion as, in time, he might probably become to the world at large. The golden bait, "to meet Mr. Gordon," was turned to full account by all who, for any reason, wished to assemble a company of the *élite*. No mamma with more daughters than she could manage, no host with visitors difficult to entertain, no aspirant for the honors of "good society," failed to obtain this bait, if possible, and to hold it forth. He was courted on all sides; and all pronounced him worthy to be courted. There were, however, some who said that he was too young to face with impunity the fumes of incense so profuse; who feared, indeed, that his head would thereby be turned. But their anxiety was groundless. James Gordon's head stood in no danger from incense such as this. Not because he was humble; but because he was proud.

These people—these ordinary men and women—who were so full of commonplace interests, of ephemeral anxieties; who, in theory, regarded talent and its productions as things to be patronized and encouraged, but, in practice, as of no particular importance, so long as marriages, foxes, and the affairs of neighbors, remain to provide the human mind with sustenance—what were these people, that their opinions should clate, or should depress? He had marked out for himself a path far above their heads: a path among the stars, and the starlike spirits of the earth. Neither were any popular assurances needed to convince him that he was no common man. A voice in his own breast told him this; and that voice never spoke more plainly than when he sat alone, among his books. At such

times, he forgot the outer world, or thought of it only as a philosopher thinks, with a view to renovation or reformation. He would pore, far on into the night, over the records of past ages—the deeds which men had done, the victories which they had achieved, the discoveries which they had made; until his soul burned within him, and he felt that he too was capable of great things.

He intended to leave behind him an immortal name, and also a shining example. Perfection was his aim; to attain it, he resolved that self-control must be his leading principle. He would have every impulse, every passion, at his beck and call, as it were. Reason alone should regulate his actions. His morals should be irrepachable. He would show himself honorable, high-minded, true, and just. He would be a good churchman, a good landlord, a good brother; he would be charitable to the poor; equally courteous to high and low. Neither in minor details should any flaw be found. He would not only think and argue well; he would also chat well, ride well, shoot well. Whatsoever he undertook to do—were it to write a book, or were it to cut a pencil—he would do it well.

His heart, he determined, must always yield subjection to his intellect. The indulgence of any strong attachment was, in his eyes, beneath the dignity of a reasonable mind. That a silly girl, a miss in her teens, should regard love as the *bonum ultimum*, was only a matter of course. But that a man, capable of something higher, an intellectual man, should live in his affections—above all, that he should condescend to fall in love, to risk his peace on the smiles of a woman—what notion was more degrading? When heaven and earth, when the past, the present, and the future, are all teeming with excellent and glorious things; and life is not long enough for the consideration of a thousandth, nay, of a millionth part: that he should turn aside from these, and, because she has a pretty face, forsooth, or a sweet voice, or a charming manner, should devote himself to her—could any folly be greater?

With such feelings James Gordon went out into society; looked calmly upon women renowned for their beauty, for their grace, for their powers of fascination; spent familiar hours in their company, was admired and courted: and returned heart-whole to his study. He was quite prepared, however, to admit that a time might come, when, for the good of his establishment, he might feel himself called upon to marry. In this case, he

would endeavor to find some reasonable and placid person, who would satisfy his requirements, without giving or expecting any thing romantic in the way of love. Upon such a person he would readily bestow a moderate affection, like that which he already bestowed upon Olivia, and, in a less degree, upon Annie, Marian, and Cissy. It would not absorb him; it would not draw down his mind. He would still be free to pursue his shining path, continually higher.

These sentiments were the last of which any one who relied upon appearances would suspect him. Seemingly—like Madame de Staël's Oswald—"il réunissait tout ce qui peut entraîner les autres et soi-même." He was barely five-and-twenty, and he looked no more. He was exceedingly handsome; and his face bore the stamp of his genius. His manners were universally agreeable; and he could converse, with apparent interest, upon any subject, from politics to croquet.

But how little we know of one another in this life, where we walk by sight! When we estimate the inward by the outward men, what blunders we are apt to make!—What blunders, moreover, when we estimate ourselves by our dreams!

CHAPTER IV.

"Yes; and just now I have seen him,
Cold, smiling, and blest,
Laid in his coffin. God help me!
While he is at rest,
I am cursed still to live—
Death loved him the best."

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

THE dawn of her father's funeral-day found Gabrielle lying in an unconscious state; succeeded, ere long, by the delirium of fever. The unusual stir, the hum of subdued voices in the rooms below, the tramp of footsteps mounting the stairs, and then more cautiously descending, the roll of wheels, solemn and slow, over the gravel; all which awakened in Olivia a dreary sickness of heart—made no impression whatever upon Gabrielle. Her lethargy only gave way when, later, a muffled peal broke from the belfry. Then, in a voice of terrible pathos, she cried, that Somebody was dead!

Thus commenced a wearisome illness; which lasted during many weeks. The winter snows had melted, the frosts were abating, flowers had begun to blossom, and trees to bud, when Gabrielle left her room. Had Mr. Barber been one degree less skillful, Olivia less tender, or the old

nurse less attentive, she would have left it never more; or rather, she would so effectually have left it, as to follow her father to the world "beyond the sun." A little while the young soul lingered, its pinions half unfolded, hovering midway between that world and ours. But only a little while. Soon, albeit reluctantly, it sank down again—back to earth.

Meantime the executors—James Gordon, and a neighboring clergyman, Mr. Lascelles—had examined into the state of her affairs. They found that Mr. Wynn had left no debts, and no fortune. Gabrielle's sole inheritance was the small dowry of her mother; a sum barely sufficient to maintain her, from year to year, in clothes and pocket-money. On the first discovery of this fact, Mr. Lascelles—aware that, beyond a somewhat remote cousinship, she had no claim upon the Gordons—was seriously alarmed. But James speedily dispelled his anxieties, remarking that Farnley was now her home; and that he should of course provide for her as for one of his own sisters.

"You are exceedingly kind," said Mr. Lascelles; "but allow me to suggest that a step so important demands mature consideration. Have you thought of all the inconveniences—"

"Who on earth would take her if we did not?" interrupted James. "There is nothing else to be done. Besides, one woman more or less in a house makes very little difference. My sisters will be glad to have her society; and as for me—I shouldn't care if there were ten of her, so that they didn't live in my study."

"Well! she won't trouble you long, I suspect," observed Mr. Lascelles, with a significant smile.

"What do you mean?" said James, shortly.

"You know young Godfrey?"

"That straw-haired fellow who is forever coming to ask after my cousin? He was at the funeral, too. I know him."

"He is in his last year at Oxford; he'll be ordained ere long; and there's a good fat living waiting for him. He may marry as soon as he feels inclined, and—"

"Is he engaged to marry my cousin?"

"Not positively engaged. But next door to it. He is head over ears in love."

"Oh! Youths like Godfrey are always head over ears in love. How about this deed?"

Mr. Lascelles was recalled to his work; first glancing, half-amused, half-irritated, at his co-executor—and wondering by what vast gulf of inferiority youths like Godfrey were distinguished from youths like Gordon!

One day, toward the middle of February, Gabrielle was sitting, propped up with pillows in an arm-chair, before the drawing-room fire. Olivia, entering, stood for a minute at her side, and watched her, somewhat sadly.

"You are tired, dear. Perhaps it was not wise in me to let you come down-stairs."

"Oh, yes! I am almost well now, you know. Can you stay with me, Olivia? I want to talk to you."

"Talk away," said Olivia, who was already seated, tatting in hand; "the more you say, the better I shall be pleased; so long as you do not fatigue yourself."

"You are very kind," said Gabrielle, smiling faintly. "That was one thing I wished to tell you—how thankful I am for all your kindness, and for all that you have done."

"My dear child, who could help being kind to you? And as to 'all that I have done,' you know I delight in nursing; and you have been so good and so patient. Besides, the real business part, so to speak, has fallen to old Bromehead; and I have been home twice—"

"Yes—how glad I was when you came back!" interrupted Gabrielle. "But you look quite fagged and worn. Now that I am so much better, I want you to go home for good."

"I shall, ere long; when you are better still—well enough to accept Mrs. Barber's proposal of taking you to the sea."

"Then, since I must live, I will try to become well, as soon as possible, for your sake."

"Since you *must* live! Oh, Gabrielle!"

"Why should I hide the truth, Olivia—that I am living against my will? You know I would infinitely rather die. I have told you so all along."

"Yes; and I have told you all along that a day will come when you will thank God that you did not die. We don't know what is really good for us; or it would be no such difficult matter to pray, Thy will be done."

"I can't think why we were made so blind and short-sighted," said the young girl, with a sigh.

"You had better stop talking for the present, dear Gabrielle. Let me shake up your pillows. A little nap will do you all the good in the world."

"Not yet—I have not finished. I want to speak to you about what you said last week—about coming to live at Farnley."

"Well, dear?"

"I have been thinking it over, and it does

not seem right. Why should I force myself upon you? You might find me an inconvenience, a burden; and that I could not bear. When my strength returns, I shall go out as a governess."

"Indeed," said Olivia, quickly, "you will not. You don't know with what pleasure I look forward to having you at Farnley. You will be my companion when Marian and Cissy are from home, and James is in his study. You will help me among my poor, audit my accounts, read to me while I work. I assure you I have every intention of turning you to good account."

"I hope so, indeed, if I should come. But your brother—he—"

"Gabrielle," interposed Olivia, a little stiffly, "when you know James, you will find that he never says what he does not mean, or makes proposals which he does not wish to be accepted. I told you how, from the first, he took it for granted that Farnley would be your home."

"He is very kind. But—"

"We will have no more 'buts,'" said Olivia. "I insist on your shutting your eyes, and going off to sleep. And, first, promise to sleep away the governess idea, that I may not hear of it again."

"You sha'n't hear of it for the present, at any rate," said Gabrielle, smiling. "But sleep is out of the question, just now. If I mustn't talk to you, please talk to me; tell me about Farnley—the Farnley people, I mean."

With this request Olivia was nothing loath to comply. The next half hour passed pleasantly to each; Gabrielle putting in a question, now and then, but, for the most part, listening silently: while Olivia gave glowing descriptions of Annie, Annie's husband, Annie's children, of Marian, and of Cissy; and—last, not least—of James. Olivia was never weary of enlarging on James and his multifarious perfections. Gabrielle had constantly been entertained thereby, during her convalescence; and had grown, much to Olivia's delight, to regard him as a hero, an Admirable Crichton, such a one as she had seen often in books and in dreams, but never in real life.

"I shall be dreadfully afraid of him, though," she said, when Olivia, having long discoursed with unflagging eloquence, paused to take breath.

Reply was precluded by the entrance of Jane, with a letter addressed to Gabrielle.

"A letter from Charlie!"—A flush of pleasure—or, as Olivia thought, of something deeper

than pleasure—mounted to her temples. She tore the envelope open, with trembling hands; and a long silence followed.

"Olivia! What do you think?" she exclaimed, suddenly starting from her reclining posture; "Meddiscombe, Charlie's future living, is only two miles from Farnley."

"Meddiscombe! Is Meddiscombe his living? I know it well."

"Oh! I must get you to tell me all about it. Is the scenery pretty? and the rectory?"

"The rectory is a comfortable house, of gray stone. The scenery is beautiful—not one colliery within sight. I have met Mr. Hawkins, the present incumbent, at dinner-parties now and then. He is holding the living, I suppose, for Mr. Godfrey?"

"Yes; and Charlie will begin as his curate. Charlie hopes to be ordained next Christmas; but that is a long while, isn't it, to wait, before I see him again?"

"You have known him a long time?"

"Oh, all my life; he is like an elder brother. I can hardly fancy what ten months without him will be. He's such a dear boy—so good, and so kind! and papa was so fond of him."

Then Gabrielle went off into a dream. And Olivia likewise.

CHAPTER V.

"Some mighty gulf of separation past,
I seemed transported to another world."

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE sun had recently gone down behind a pile of storm clouds; and the winds which had raged throughout the day were beginning to sink, to die into feeble moans, as though exhausted by their own turbulence. Gradually, but surely, the shadows of twilight were enveloping Farnley Park; darkening the long slopes that undulated beneath the budding trees; hiding the nooks where tufts of primroses and dog-violets heralded spring. To Gabrielle, who, at this hour, was approaching her new home, the scene appeared an emblem of her life: whose sun, she believed, like to-day's sun, had set; leaving twilight only.

A month at the sea-side, with Mrs. Barber, had done much toward restoring her health. But she still felt weak; and it was a very pale, a very wan young face that watched in anxious curiosity from the carriage-window.

"I shall be glad to see Olivia again," she thought; "but I wish James were not there. I

feel so in awe of him; and Olivia said that he had such penetrating eyes. What a beautiful park this is! What fine old trees! And there is the house in the distance—how large and grand! I have often read of such a place, but I never thought of it as a home—it seemed too splendid. I would rather be going to our own little rectory, with the servants so glad to see me, and the drawing-room fire so cosy, and my stool, and the tea waiting to be made, and papa's chair in its old place." . . .

"Are you feeling ill, ma'am?" inquired a dignified maid, who had been sent to escort her from the station, and who now sat on the opposite seat, in solemn respectability.

"I am only tired, thank you," answered Gabrielle, and repressed the swelling tears.

The drive through the park was long; the road was winding. Four times had the house appeared in sight, only to vanish among intervening trees; and Gabrielle, after as many fits of needless agitation, had just prepared her mind for another half-hour's journey, when the carriage turned an angle, made a wide sweep, and stopped. The goal was reached.

A long, three-storied pile, of irregular architecture; part, to all appearance, very old, and part, comparatively new. At the east end, thickly covered with ivy, was a small chapel—to Gabrielle's eyes the one bit of home. A stately personage, whom—a little doubtfully—she supposed to be the butler, advanced to meet her, opened the carriage-door. Mechanically she descended; followed him up a flight of steps, on either side of which reposed a huge stone lion—across the hall—a vision of marble pillars, orange-shrubs, statues—finally, through a tiny ante-chamber, into a great drawing-room with a painted ceiling; where, all alone, he left her. Then Gabrielle looked up at the ceiling, round at the pictures, and exclaimed:

"No, I can never, never, never feel at home here!"

"My poor child!" cried Olivia's voice at the door, "here you are."—A kiss.—"I cannot say how glad I am to see you. And you look really better; the sea has worked wonders."—Another kiss, and another.—"How stupid of Wilcox to bring you into this desolate room! Come with me, dear."

Possessing herself of Gabrielle's travelling-bag, she led the way to a small octagon-shaped boudoir, where books, and work, and pretty things abounded, and a bright little fire imparted a universal glow of cheerfulness and warmth.

"Now," said Olivia, wheeling a crimson sofa into the fire's vicinity, "you shall lie here, and I will give you some tea. This is my own special sitting-room. Isn't it snug?"

She was pouring out a fragrant cup of tea as she spoke, and placing it on a little table beside the sofa. And Gabrielle drank the tea, and found it refreshing; and her desolate feelings began to melt "like snowflakes i' thaw."

"After all," she thought, "home depends on people, not on places."

"We shall be a small party, Gabrielle—only a trio—for some time to come. Marian and Cissy are away, making a round of visits. You will be a great acquisition to me. I seldom see James, excepting at meals, and in the evening. Half the day he is out, and the other half he immures himself in his study."

"What does he do there?"

"In his study? Oh, he reads and writes; he is always writing something. Just now he is busy about an article for the *Quarterly Review*. Gabrielle, dear, I am so sorry—but he can't bear me to be unpunctual; I must go and dress. You will lie still and rest—sleep, if possible—and I will send your dinner here."

This proposal Gabrielle gratefully accepted. She felt hardly equal, just now, to encounter the formidable James: and when the maid who had escorted her to Farnley reappeared, bringing a pair of comfortable slippers, and a pillow to enhance the ease of the crimson sofa, her contentment, physically speaking, was complete. She lay watching the fire, and listening to the sounds in the hall, such sounds as betoken a dinner-table in course of preparation. Presently a gong sounded, and Olivia peeped into the room: begged her to ring if she should want any thing more, and reiterated the hope that she might sleep. Then the maid came again, bearing a tray with a tempting little dinner—a dinner exactly suited to Gabrielle's still fastidious appetite. And, this disposed of, and the tray removed, and the maid gone finally, Gabrielle did sleep.

Dreamlessly, at first; but, after a while, confused visions, blending one with another, began to flit before her. Now her father was alive again—they were at Eversfield as of old; now he lay on his deathbed, and she watched his labored breathing. Then with Charlie Godfrey, on a high mountain; and the mountain gave way, and they fell—down—down; and suddenly Charlie was gone, and she was alone, in a valley, walking rapidly.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death, she thought, but she could not be sure—every thing

was so vague, so mysterious. And after all, was she alone? It seemed as though one walked by her side—a figure—whose, she knew not. At the end of the valley was an opening; in the distance she heard music—beautiful music, swelling ever louder. Eager to reach it, she pressed forward, that figure still at her side. Occasionally his pace slackened; then, by an irresistible impulse, she turned and beckoned him on.

The valley widened; she had reached the opening. Before her stood a multitude, a mighty multitude, bathed in a flood of sunshine; the music proceeded from their midst. She heard it in its fulness now, and it was as the sound of many waters. All instruments were there—the organ, the harp, the trumpet, the flute, the clarinet. All voices were there—grand basses, sweet tenors, clear sopranos. All people were there—children, women; men—every variety of stature, of face, of form. Around, above, among the clouds, floated innumerable angels. The air was full of music, of beauty, of glory. Then the unknown figure, hitherto so silent, smiled on her, and said, "God bless you!" . . .

She had been only dreaming, she knew; and yet—how was it that the music continued?

"Has James awakened you, dear?" asked Olivia, at her side.

"James?" she echoed, absently.

"Don't you hear him, playing on the chapel organ? I fear it did awaken you."

"It is very beautiful," said Gabrielle. "It gave me a beautiful dream."

"I have been in heaven, and he took me there!" she thought, as her eyes closed once more.

Further witness she had none, this night, of her Cousin James's vicinity; Olivia insisted upon sending her to bed, and, moreover, forbade her to rise before breakfast in the morning. But when the morning came, Gabrielle awoke refreshed; and the faithful Olivia, knocking, as the gong sounded, at her door, found her not only dressed, but looking—Olivia herself admitted—better than she had looked that year.

So they descended together to the breakfast-room—a pleasant room, large and cheerful, and fragrant with hyacinths. The sun was beaming through the windows as brightly, almost as warmly, as in June. Below them were two fountains, in full play. The crystal water sprang up, as if in joy, to greet the sunshine, and fell transformed to gold. A peacock stood near, unfolding its gorgeous tail.

Involuntarily an exclamation of delight burst from Gabrielle's lips.

"The peacock and the fountain match well, don't they?" said a voice behind her. She turned with a start, and met the eyes—very large, very dark, very brilliant—of a young man, who had entered unobserved, and was standing at her elbow; a tall young man, distinguished-looking, and of athletic build.

"I don't think we need an introduction?" he said, smiling, as he proffered his hand.

"You are my Cousin James, I suppose?" she answered, shyly.

"And you are my Cousin Gabrielle. I am glad to welcome you to Farnley."

"Thank you," murmured Gabrielle, and turned again to the window. But she saw the fountain no longer.

"The tea is ready," said Olivia, from behind the urn.

"So am I," replied James; "I have walked to Holt's farm, and back, this morning; and my natural appetite is none the less."

"To Holt's farm and back? Ten miles! Why did you go so early?"

"I wanted to catch the old man before he started for market. May I give you some ham, Miss Wy— Gabrielle? No? Then you must have this egg. I met that son of his yesterday, Olivia—the black sheep."

"Anthony?"

"Yes, that's the name. Well, I met him on my way from the Featherstones. Poor fellow! you never saw such a wreck. I should say he was far gone in decline. And there he is at Rotherbridge, living as he can, craving for peace with his father, but afraid to go home. I volunteered to try what I could do in the way of intercession."

"I fear you would not have much success. Holt is so terribly hard."

"Yes, he's hard enough. He gave way at last, though. He will fetch the lad home to-day."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Olivia. "So soon! Ah! James, that's what poor old nurse used to call your 'gift of coming over people!'"

James did not apparently hear this speech. He turned to Gabrielle, and hoped that she felt herself rested.

"Oh yes, thank you, I slept so well!" said Gabrielle, still shy.

"This house is a harbor of refuge, in one respect. No ghost, notwithstanding its age, has ever been seen in it. Rather a bad compliment, I fear, if we come to sift the matter. But, at any rate, our nights are our own."

"Yes. I suppose we should be more distinguished for a ghost or two," said Olivia. "But it is not a distinction that I desire."

"Gabrielle feels the same, no doubt. Now, for my part, I should enjoy meeting a ghost. It would be something fresh, at least. Besides, what are we ourselves but ghosts?—only we are veiled."

"If you talk so, you will make us afraid of ourselves!" exclaimed Olivia. But Gabrielle smiled.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" inquired James, addressing her again. "The *bond-fide* ghost, I mean—the kind of thing that comes at night, in a white sheet, walks like the rustle of silk, and so forth?"

"Does any one, nowadays, believe in any thing so foolish?" cried Gabrielle.

"Does any one, nowadays, confess to any thing so foolish?" said James, smiling.

Then having, as he conceived, done his duty by her, he turned to Olivia, and, during the remainder of the meal, the brother and sister discussed the letters of the morning, with other family matters, leaving Gabrielle to her own meditations. It was a relief to think that the first interview with this formidable James was over. Though, after all, he was not so very formidable! He made her feel shy, a little in awe—she could fancy him, on occasion, sarcastic; still, on the whole, he was both agreeable and attractive, and she believed that he could, if he chose, be fascinating. Then his face. She had never, that she remembered, seen such a face before—one in which physical beauty and intellectual greatness were so wonderfully united. Olivia might well be proud of him. What sister would not be proud of such a brother? In short—since Gabrielle's organs of veneration and ideality were as large as their scope for exercise had been limited—she had worked herself, before breakfast was over, into a fit of genuine hero-worship.

A bell, ringing long and loudly, called to prayers; and Olivia led the way, through a baize door, which opened from the hall, and down a stone-flagged passage, to the chapel. The chapel, which had been built toward the middle of the fourteenth century, was a good specimen of the richest style of decorated architecture. East and west were two large windows, each of seven lights; the other windows were small, but very beautiful, their pointed arches highly ornamented with flowers and foliage, delicately carved in stone. The glass was generally of a somewhat later date, and retained much of its first glory in

radiant coloring. Canopied niches adorned the walls, each containing a statue, more or less perfect, of some apostle or saint. The canopies were also highly ornamented, as indeed was every part of the building. Gurgoyles, cherubs, faces angelic or human, good or bad, peered from each corner; and in the ribbings of the roof, no opportunity had been lost, for the insertion of a bunch of nuts or acorns, a star, or a flower half-hidden among leaves.

A group of angels, carved in oak, with grand, pure faces, stood on the chancel-step, supporting the huge brass candlestick; and three similar angels, two at the organ, and one at the vestry-door, were armed with staves, which, hollow at the end, served to carry wax-lights. The chancel also contained two marble monuments, masterpieces of mediæval sculpture; but, as Gabrielle sat beside Olivia, her eye wandered beyond these, to the east window. It was a window erected—as she learned from the old English inscription at its base—in honor of James Gordon, knight, aged sixty-eight years, and of Cicely his wife, aged sixty-six years, the builders of that chapel—who had passed to their rest in the month of August, 1370, within two days of one another.

What kind of man had he been, Gabrielle wondered, that James Gordon of so very long ago? He had lived in a chivalrous time; perhaps he had been one of those ideal knights of whom she had read, "*Sans peur et sans reproche*"—"true and tender," "selfless men and stainless gentlemen;" one of those who, although not wanting in glory of other kinds, counted it ever their highest glory to defend the defenceless, to help the helpless, to minister to the weak. And perhaps, in outward form, he had resembled the James Gordon of to-day. Perhaps "Cicely his wife" had been as proud of him as Olivia was now of his descendant.

She must have been a happy woman, that Cicely—so it seemed to Gabrielle. How her heart must have swelled when she saw her colors waving from his helmet at the tournament! She must have felt anxious, though, sometimes, when she helped to buckle his steel corselet, and then saw him ride away, not knowing whether he would ever ride home again. And no doubt she was sometimes, in their youth, a little jealous too, for if he were indeed such another as his namesake, he must have been admired by many—many fairer, perhaps, than she.

Well! all was over now; she had long been rest—and oh, what a peaceful story of their life, that inscription, to Gabrielle's mind,

told! They had grown old together; they had built this chapel together—it might be as a thank-offering for the blessings which together they had enjoyed; and when that separation came, at the thought of which they had surely often trembled, it proved, in God's mercy, so brief, that, ere the one who was left could have had time to realize its wretchedness, it was over, and—so Gabrielle trusted—they were reunited, forever and forever.

She wished that it were possible to look back five hundred years, and see the old couple kneeling, as they must often have knelt, side by side in this very chapel. Then she tried to imagine that sight, until they became as living forms before her—forms far more real, for the time, than those which were actually present. Suddenly she awoke to the consciousness that a long train of servants—modern servants—were filing in through a side door, and that James was seated at the organ. Immediately afterward an elderly clergyman, short, and inclined to stoutness, with iron-gray hair, bristly whiskers, and a preoccupied manner, entered in his surplice, and the service began.

The clergyman read in gusts, reminding Gabrielle of the wind. His voice first rose to ungoverned heights, then fell to unfathomable depths. His air, however, was fervent, and his intonation was impressive; and James's music, to her ear, was sublime. Beneath his fingers the dead notes awoke to such life and glory, as the unsophisticated Gabrielle never doubted to come straight from his heart. And she supposed that it was the reserve of his grand, self-contained nature which made his countenance all the while so immovable—she could almost have thought, so cold.

"Stay a moment, James," said Olivia, when the service was over, and the servants were gone: "I must introduce Gabrielle to Mr. Morris."

"The clergyman?" asked Gabrielle.

"The clergyman! Our clergyman!" said James. "Our own especial property."

"Our chaplain—so called," explained Olivia, smiling. "He lives in a small house in the park, and reads prayers for us here, every morning, Sundays excepted. He was once the vicar of the parish; but his health failed."

She paused abruptly; for at this moment the vestry-door opened, and Mr. Morris reappeared.

He had doffed his surplice, exposing to view a rusty coat, in some places much too large, and in some too small. With this the fellow-garments seemed made to correspond; the cravat, in gar-

ticular, being at least twice as capacious as any other cravat which Gabrielle had ever seen, and arranged in folds of a more singular formation than she would otherwise have believed it possible for a cravat to assume. Walking uncertainly, he approached Olivia; took her hand in silence, without any thing of a smile, or a change of countenance; and dropped it. Then, his own hands clasped behind him, his head slightly on one side, and his eyes fixed on the ground, he remarked in such a tone as would convey the idea of continuing, rather than of commencing, a conversation:

"Happy release. She died last night—Mrs. Linley."

"Ah! so I guessed when I heard the bell. Poor thing! She has suffered very much," said Olivia.

Mr. Morris started from his dreamy posture, and wheeled himself round toward James.

"Unless I greatly err," he said, "you have in your library the *Chronographia* of Georgius Syncellus?"

"Yes, we have. Do you want it?" inquired James.

"If you'll trust it with me. I must refer to something. My treatise is at a stand-still."

"You had better come and hunt it out. It is with other old fellows of the same genus. You're welcome to as many as you like."

Mr. Morris received this speech in silence. A minute later, he started, and said:

"Thanks."

"I'll show you where they are," returned James, moving toward the door. Mr. Morris was following, when Olivia intercepted him, to introduce Gabrielle. He paused, stared absently at the young stranger, and made a distant bow. Immediately afterward, as though prompted by something in her appearance, he observed:

"The Ten Tribes are not by any means so untraceable as many have supposed. For instance—"

"How is your breathing, Mr. Morris?" inquired James, who, being a few steps in advance, had lost these words.

"Better, thanks—better on the whole. Now for Syncellus."

The library adjoined the chapel. He hastened to the side where the most ancient of the books were deposited, and stood looking up in admiring veneration, while, for the first time, a faint smile brightened his face.

"Sacrilege! sacrilege!" he broke forth, an instant later.

"What's the matter?" said James.

"To think that your grandfather should have the—the—I beg your pardon; but to think that he could rebind such a book! One of the oldest copies extant of the *Vulgate*. Patched up and rebound. Alas! Alas!"

"Yes, it was a terrible blunder. It can't be helped now, though. Here is Syncellus," said James.

Mr. Morris groaned again, but received the folio; opened it reverently, his head on one side again, and his body thrown somewhat backward; finally, with a mutter of "Don't let me detain you," relapsed into abstraction, and an arm-chair.

Olivia followed her brother, in order to whisper with an expectant smile, "Well, James! what do you think of Gabrielle?"

"Think of her! Now, is not that a question worthy of woman? What can I be expected to think, having made her acquaintance exactly one hour and twenty minutes ago?"

"But she must strike you in some way. My own opinion has been unchanged from the first moment that I saw her."

"Well," said James, considering, "what do I think? I know what I don't think. I don't think her pretty."

"Don't you?" cried Olivia; "I have often seen her look pretty. At any rate, she has a most attractive face."

"I will try to find the attraction when I have time," replied James; "for the present I must content myself by believing in it."

He turned toward his study, leaving Olivia a little crestfallen and much disappointed. She was never satisfied with her own tastes, unless they were shared by James; she had taken a fancy to Gabrielle at first sight, and she had expected him to do the same.

"He is so engrossed with his philosophies," she murmured, "he cares for nothing else. Really, sometimes, I could almost wish that he were more like ordinary people!"

CHAPTER VI.

"My life upon't—thine eye
Hath stayed upon some favor that it loves;
Hath it not, boy?"

"A little, by your favor."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

A FORTNIGHT had gone by, and Gabrielle was no longer a stranger at Farnley. She knew her way about the house; she had explored the gardens; she had discovered the prettiest spots in

the park. She had accompanied Olivia to the schools, and to some of the cottages; also in various calls among the surrounding families. The first excitement of the change in her life had begun to wear away; she was settling down in a monotonous round of quiet occupations.

Breakfast at half-past nine; luncheon at half-past one; dinner at seven: such was the order of the day. After breakfast, Gabrielle practised, read, and wrote a letter—if a letter were owing to either of her two correspondents—Mrs. Barber and Charlie Godfrey. After luncheon, she and Olivia drove or walked, paid or received visits, played *tête-à-tête* games of croquet. After dinner, reading aloud and working, with a little music, filled up the time till prayers.

Gabrielle was already weary of this routine. It seemed to her that she was leading an empty life, doing no good to herself or to anybody else. She missed the thousand and one small services which she had rendered daily to her father; which had kept her head and her fingers constantly busy, but had sent her happy to her bed, because she had been useful. She missed her household duties, her village children, even her accounts—accounts which, once, she had felt so irksome. Her favorite pursuits, her reading, her music, seemed, now that their critic and director was gone, to have lost their zest. Olivia was extremely kind, but she had her own employments; and Gabrielle's dreams of aiding in these quickly evaporated. For Olivia, despite her first professions, was one of those persons who are never satisfied, unless what they have to do, be done entirely by themselves. Gabrielle's attempts at coöperation were more of a burden than an assistance. This Gabrielle was not slow to discover; and the attempts ceased. Olivia petted her, mothered her, watched over her, and the young girl loved her dearly. But Olivia did not go beyond a certain point: and she could not satisfy Gabrielle's cravings.

Of James they saw very little. He was out, in his study, all day, appearing only at meals, and frequently not then. When, however, he found himself in Gabrielle's company, he treated her with unimpeachable politeness; addressed a fair portion of his remarks to her; communicated any bit of news, public or private, which he fancied might be in her way; inquired after she thought of Yorkshire—and so forth. But it was politeness, and no more. No real interest appeared either in tone or in manner; both were courteous, attentive—and cold. The subjects which he chose for conversation were

light and trivial; often such as, in an experienced hand, would have diverged into rattle and badinage. But Gabrielle's hand was not experienced. She sat quiet and a little shy, smiling when required, replying—"Yes," or "No," or "Did you indeed?" or "Very likely." He must think her very tiresome! She did wish that she could answer him better! She wished, also, that he would sometimes talk of what interested himself—instead of stooping, and fawning, to find what might interest her.

The sick yearnings after her father, after the old Eversfield life, increased rather than diminished. She gathered no strength as the days went by; she was still pale and wan. Olivia watched her with considerable anxiety; and, one evening, went to James for advice.

"Five months is a long time to a young girl like Gabrielle; and it is now upward of five months since her loss. Yet she does not seem to be getting over it in the least; and she looks so delicate! What can we do?"

"I am not a good person to ask," said James. "I don't pretend to understand girls. They are queer beings. Either they have no soul at all, or they are overburdened with it. I can't say that they interest me."

"But do leave your writing, just to-night, and come to the drawing-room. It is so dull for her there, with no company but mine. Do!"

"As you like," said James. "My review is finished; I am at your service for the present."

He extinguished the study-candles, and repaired to the drawing-room. Gabrielle was lying on the sofa; her eyes were closed. She might almost have been taken for one of Chantrey's marble figures—she was so still, so white. Perhaps she was half asleep; perhaps absorbed in thought: she did not hear James's step. Olivia had gone up-stairs in search of some work; and all was silence.

James sat down in a low chair at a short distance from the sofa; and, opening a book that lay near him, began to read. But presently his eyes wandered toward the girlish profile which, a few months back, seen much as he saw it now, had taken his sister's heart by storm. For the first time since he had known Gabrielle—half curious, half interested—he scrutinized her closely. By degrees a softer expression stole over his countenance. He was conscious of a strange thrill, an indefinable emotion, such as he had never before experienced. It was pity, he supposed; she looked so young, yet so sad.

Suddenly Gabrielle raised her eyes, and ex-

countered that deep, fixed gaze. The color rushed into her face, and, strangely enough, into his own. He felt embarrassed, he did not know why; and each was equally relieved when, at this moment, Olivia reappeared.

Gabrielle was quickly on her feet, and the first to break silence.

"When did you come in?" she asked. "I never heard you!"

"You were asleep."

"No, indeed—indeed I was not," as he smiled and looked incredulous.

"You must have been uncommonly interested in your thoughts, then. If you would not call me impertinent, I should like to know what they were."

"I was not exactly thinking—I was looking at something."

"I suppose it would be too much to ask the nature of that something?"

"It was a place—a landscape," said Gabrielle. Then, perceiving that James's book lay close upon the table, while James himself was leaning forward, and watching her, with—what she had never till now beheld—something of eagerness in his face, she felt herself encouraged to proceed. "I saw it once—I mean really—a few years ago. It is a place some miles from Eversfield, a bend in the river, very lonely and very still. The bank is very steep on one side; on the other it slopes gently to the water's edge. The steep bank is cleft in two, with a valley between; and when I was there, this valley was carpeted with leaves, which had fallen from the trees above it. The autumnal tints were in full beauty—every imaginable shade—dark green, light green, copper color, russet, brown. High on the bank was a wooden bench; where you could sit and look straight down—hundreds of feet—into the water, and see the sky, and the grass, and the trees, and their tints, all reflected like a picture. A few jackdaws were flying about, wheeling toward the river, and cawing in a wild, melancholy way. The atmosphere was subdued and quiet; there were no human sights or sounds. It was like being shut out from the world."

"And when I entered just now, you were trying to shut yourself out again—sitting on the wooden bench, and listening to the jackdaws? No wonder my footstep escaped you."

"I was trying to see the place as I suppose it is at this moment—the trees standing dark and grim against the sky, and a wake of moonlight on the water. And I was thinking—"

"Well?"

"You'll laugh if I go on."

"Never mind. What is there in a friendly laugh? You must go on now."

"I was thinking that, if suicide were allowable, it would be very pleasant—for any one who was unhappy, you know—to go to the side that slopes so gently among the trees, and lie down in the cool water and float away. Death would be so easy—hardly like death, there—with that beautiful, peaceful place for the last glimpse of earth."

"And the jackdaws to caw the last requiem! I suspect that if ever suicide should become 'allowable,' we should have to keep a pretty strict watch over you; otherwise you would be off to that 'beautiful, peaceful place,' by the very first train next morning."

Gabrielle smiled; but it was not a happy smile.

"I'll tell you what, Gabrielle," pursued James, kindling into sudden warmth; "such a death as you describe might be very pretty, and very sentimental, but it would also be very idle and very cowardly. There is a class of persons—chiefly third-rate poets, and—I beg your pardon—young ladies—who think it exceedingly fine to feel and to express a perpetual sickly weariness of life. Nothing to me is more intensely provoking, and worse—more degrading to human nature. What are we worth if we can't weather a few showers, if we can't live, can't work our work, without our 'dear gazelles,' and so forth?"

"But surely," burst in Gabrielle, "there are cases, real sorrows, when—how can we help wishing to follow, to be reunited—"

She paused, half choked by her own vehemence. Then, meeting James's eye, she colored violently.

"You may call them morbid, sentimental, those people who long for death, and perhaps you are right. But you should not look on them so hardly. Instead of despising, you should pity—help them, if you can, to overcome their morbidness and the sentimentality—to see that their morbidness may still be left to them, or, at least, some work. Often, I dare say, they have tried worlds to get rid of that longing, only to find they know how."

"Gabrielle, stop one moment. Let me say this: I was not speaking of suicide, but of those—people who are really sinking under sorrow. Although even they—but I won't say anything about that. The class I meant, make sorrow their own. They wish to die—or, rather, they wish it—because they are miserable."

stood; or because they love, and their love is unrequited; or some similar stuff. They may be known by certain symptoms—among which is the repudiating of meat, and the writing of verses."

"What is the matter, James?" cried Olivia from the other end of the room—"you look very much perturbed."

"I? I am not in the least perturbed, thank you, my dear Olivia." He rose, his countenance instantaneously recovering its usual equanimity. "By-the-by, where are the foreign photographs?—those I brought from the Continent?"

A moment later, a sandal-wood box, together with a stereoscope, stood on a little table before the sofa where Gabrielle sat; and James was installed at her side.

"You seem partial to landscapes," said he, with his slightly-patronizing smile; "perhaps you would like to see these?"

He opened the box, revealing a large collection of slides, from which he selected one, a transparent one, and handed the stereoscope to Gabrielle. She took it somewhat listlessly, but no sooner had she raised it to her eyes than her whole aspect changed.

"Oh! what is this? How very beautiful!"

"I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs," quoted James, watching her with much amusement. "Do you see the gondolas?"

"Oh, yes! And is this really the Bridge of Sighs? Is it a true likeness?"

"Very true. I have seen the original often, looking just so, the surface of the water like glass, as it is there, and that solemn, old-world air about the houses. Are you there, by this time? You must fancy it strangely silent—only the dash of the oars to be heard, with a bell, or a gondolier's song, now and then. No wagons, no carriages, no street-cries."

"I can imagine it all," said Gabrielle.

"Well! you have seen it by daylight. Shut the stereoscope, and hold it up to the lamp—yes, so. Now you see it by moonlight."

"I like this almost better. Thank you. What a pity it is only a photograph!"

"Yes, and I've done a stupid thing—shown you the best first. It is a good collection, but it has nothing to equal that Bridge of Sighs. However, here are some Swiss views, by no means to be disdained. Do you know this?"

"It must be the Mer de Glace: it so embodies a description I once read."

"Your imagination is not your weak point, I perceive. Do you recognize that figure to the left—the fellow leaning on an alpenstock?"

"Oh, yes, I see! It is yourself."

"They shouted that, if I would stand still, I should be immortal. The first I did; the last remains to be proved. I had a friend with me, and a guide, but they were huddled out of sight. The photographer was arbitrary, and would only include one figure. Here"—he substituted another slide—"this is fine."

"This is from a picture, I think; isn't it?"

"A picture founded on Longfellow's poem of 'Walter Von Der Vogelweide.'"

"I know that poem well; I have it set to music. Oh! here are the birds feasting, and the 'portly abbot' saying, 'Why this waste of food?'"

"So you have the poem set to music? I should like to hear it. I did not know that you sang."

"I sing only a little, to amuse myself," said Gabrielle, hurriedly. "I am not sure, indeed, whether I ought to call it singing. I have no idea of what my voice really is."

"Has it always wasted its sweetness on the desert air, then? Have you never sung to your friends?"

"Only to—papa and Mrs. Barber, and Char—one other person. I had not many friends. Our village was very lonely. We were quite what people call buried."

"But now you are unearthed, and you must unearth your voice. I want so much to hear 'Vogelweide!' Do sing it at once, while Olivia makes the tea. I will open the piano."

No sooner said than done. Gabrielle shortly found herself seated upon the music-stool, "Walter Von Der Vogelweide" before her, James behind her, and a candle on each side. It would be disobliging, she thought, to "make a fuss" about so simple a matter. She therefore determined to do her best; although her heart beat fast and nervously, her fingers trembled, and a mist obscured her eyes. True, her father had delighted in her voice, and Charlie Godfrey was never weary of praising it. But then—so Gabrielle argued—her father and Charlie loved her; and love is blind.

She made a strong effort, and began:

"Vogelweide the Minnesinger,
When he left this world of ours,
Laid his body in the cloister,
Under Wurtzburg's minster-towers.

And he gave the monks his treasures,
Gave them all with this behest:
They should feed the birds at noontide
Daily on his place of rest;

Saying, 'From these wandering minstrels
I have learned the art of song;

Let me now repay the lessons
They have taught so well and long.

Thus the bard of love departed:
And, fulfilling his desire,
On his tomb the birds were feasted
By the children of the choir.

Day by day, o'er tower and turret,
In foul weather and in fair,
Day by day, in vaster numbers,
Flocked the poets of the air.

On the tree whose heavy branches
Overshadowed all the place,
On the pavement, on the tombstone,
On the poet's sculptured face.

On the cross-bars of each window,
On the lintel of each door,
They renewed the War of Wartburg,
Which the bard had fought before.

There they sang their merry carols,
Sang their lauds on every side;
And the name their voices uttered
Was the name of Vogelweide.

Till at length the portly abbot
Murmured, 'Why this waste of food?
Be it changed to loaves henceforward
For our fasting brotherhood.'

Then in vain o'er tower and turret,
From the walls and woodland nests
When the minster-bells rang noontide,
Gathered the unwelcome guests.

Then in vain, with cries discordant,
Clamorous round the Gothic spire,
Screamed the feathered Minnesingers
For the children of the choir.

Time has long effaced the inscriptions
On the cloister's funeral-stones,
And tradition only tells us
Where repose the poet's bones.

But around the vast cathedral,
By sweet echoes multiplied,
Still the birds repeat the legend,
And the name of Vogelweide."

Long before she had reached the end, nervousness and self were forgotten; swallowed up in the familiar words, in the simple, plaintive air, in the accompaniment—so like the flapping of innumerable wings. Only when the last note was silent, she awoke, as from a dream, to find that James was ransacking her portfolio in search of other songs.

"Gabrielle," said he, "that voice did not deserve to be buried. It is one of the sweetest voices I ever heard. You must have lessons."

"You must have lessons," echoed Olivia, who was seated before the tea-table, some distance off, intent upon her tatting; "I shall see about it as soon as possible. Marian's old—"

Here she found a knot in her cotton, and her voice died away.

"'Daybreak!' That is one of my great favorites," cried James. "Come, Gabrielle, it would be selfish to refuse. You don't know what a treat you are giving me."

So Gabrielle, divided between pleasure and bewilderment, sang "Daybreak;" and, after "Daybreak," "The Storm;" and, after "The Storm," "The Brook."

"I could almost find it in my heart to say—

"How I wis' it never was done."

But you had better stop—you look tired. Here is a cup of tea to revive you. And have you really lived, till now, in a state of uncertainty as to whether you did or did not possess a voice?"

"I seldom thought about it—much," said Gabrielle, smiling and blushing. "I sang because I delighted to sing, and because—" Here the smile faded. "Is there any thing remarkable in my voice, then?" she asked, in all simplicity. "Is it at all different from the generality of voices? You have heard a great many, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have heard a great many; and scarcely one, I think, superior to yours in tone. I don't say this to flatter you," he added, as Gabrielle looked incredulous. "In my opinion, nobody should be ignorant of his or her own powers."

"It would be making a mountain of a mole-hill, though, to call my voice—the simple capacity of singing—a power."

"No, I don't agree with you there," said James. "However, I can't stay, as I should like, to discuss the matter. I promised to look in on Morris this evening, to hear the last few pages of a mighty treatise which he is writing about the "Ten Missing Tribes of Israel." So now I must wish you good-night. Thank you once more."

"Good-night," returned Gabrielle, and he departed. But Gabrielle's voice sang on in his ears. Sang on while Mr. Morris read, making the treatise melodious. Sang on as he walked home across the park. Sang on in dreams, throughout the hours of darkness, and, when he awoke next morning, it was singing still.

CHAPTER VII.

"A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!"

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

THE school-room, which had retained its title—although the race of Farnley governesses had long been extinct—was a quiet, shady apart-

ment, with a baize door, secluding it in great measure from sounds of the outer world. Its windows opened upon a lonely little flower-garden. Creepers of various kinds—noisette roses, honeysuckle, and jasmine—gathered round them, and enclosed them like a frame. In this room Gabrielle found an asylum, when she wished to be undisturbed; and to this room, soon after prayers, on the day following her conversation with James, she carried the portfolio of songs.

Her experiences of the previous evening had left an agreeable impression on her mind. It was so delightful to think that any thing which she had power to do, could afford real pleasure to James! And, further, it was such a surprise! Not that she could bring herself to believe all that he had said about her voice; but it must, at least, since he had said so much, be worth some cultivation! So Gabrielle seated herself at the old school-room piano, prepared for an hour of diligent practice.

She had struck one chord, when the baize door swung on its hinges—the inner door opened—and a head appeared.

"Here she is!" cried Olivia, and entered; followed by James.

"That's right, Gabrielle!" said he, approaching the piano; "I am rejoiced to find you so well occupied."

"Perhaps you won't care to be interrupted," said Olivia. "Otherwise—"

"What is it?" asked Gabrielle, rising with heightened color. "I am ready for any thing that you wish."

"We came to inquire what you would wish," returned Olivia; "James is going into Rotherbridge, dear, on magistrate's business; and he thinks it might be a good opportunity for you to see Mr. Yates—Marian's old master—about your singing-lessons. I myself have a little shopping to get through. So, if you like, I'll order the pony-carriage. What do you say?"

Gabrielle glanced at James, and saw that he was watching her somewhat eagerly—and as if he hoped that she would say yes. She thanked Olivia, and replied that she should like it very much.

"That's settled, then," observed James, his usual *nonchalance* returning. "Olivia, suppose you send down to the vicarage, and ask whether Mrs. Edgecumbe will come with us? She is always complaining of the difficulty of getting into Rotherbridge."

"Yes, and Bradley is selling off, by-the-by. I'll write a note," said Olivia.

"But what a strange humor James is in to-day!" she remarked to Gabrielle, when he had quitted the room. "Your going was his proposal, too. He does not often trouble himself about such minor matters. Gabrielle, I hope both you and Mrs. Edgecumbe will be properly sensible of the honor?"

Gabrielle laughed—assured Olivia that she, for her part, felt fathoms-deep in obligation—and ran up-stairs with a lighter heart than she had known since her father's death.

Olivia, left alone, pondered the virtues of her Juggernaut. His interest, the previous evening, in Gabrielle's singing: his anxiety that she should drive to Rotherbridge to-day: what benevolence! what consideration! His feeling heart was touched: he wished to rouse her, to divert her mind. And how inobtrusively, how delicately he went to work!—quite, indeed, as though it had been to please himself.

"Dear James!" cried Olivia—her constant ejaculation—sealing the note of invitation to Mrs. Edgecumbe.

Half an hour later, drawn up in front of the long, irregular pile which, a fortnight ago, had seemed so formidable in Gabrielle's eyes, behold a pretty little carriage, constructed to hold four persons, and drawn by a pair of jet-black ponies. The ponies are thorough-bred, and therefore impatient. It is evidently most grievous to them to be compelled to stand, while the process of taking seats, adjusting wraps, and so forth, is enacting.

"Gabrielle, should you very much mind sitting in front with me? If not, you would be doing a great kindness to Mrs. Edgecumbe and Olivia. They can gossip so delightfully, you know, in that back seat."

"I never gossip; neither does Mrs. Edgecumbe. But arrange it your own way," said Olivia, who was armed with a huge travelling-bag, a long list of commissions, a shawl for herself, and a cloak for her cousin.

"Then, Gabrielle, will you get in here? The back seat is rather more comfortable; but self-denial for the sake of others is a wholesome exercise.—Why do you bring that bag, Olivia? I thought you had only 'a little shopping,'" said James, maliciously, as he took the reins.

Olivia, deep in her commissions, made no reply, and off started the impatient ponies, at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

"This is the first drive, Gabrielle, that I have had the honor of taking you. I must try my best to make it a pleasant one. Do you think I shall succeed?"

"I don't know."

James looked highly amused.

"I wonder whether you are descended from a certain worthy individual, of whom I read this morning that he was 'truthful even unto bluntness?' Or perhaps you feel it a stern duty to discourage the sinful practice of fishing for compliments?"

"I felt nothing at all," answered Gabrielle, blushing; "I said what came into my head."

"Exactly—'truthful,' etc. Well, never mind. Have you made Mrs. Edgecumbe's acquaintance yet?"

"Yes, I went to see her with Olivia."

"She and Olivia are great cronies. Olivia always takes to people like Mrs. Edgecumbe—people devoted to their families."

"Well, is it not quite right to be devoted to one's family?"

"Oh! quite—of course. Highly proper. But here we are at the vicarage; and there, as usual, is the family in question, soiling its pinafores, and spoiling the garden.—Hallo! Willie, how are you? Run in, will you, and see if mamma is ready? I can't leave my ponies."

"Are they naughty ponies?" inquired a squeaking voice; while children of all sizes and ages collected about the gates.

"Ay, the very essence—double-distilled—of naughtiness. It is all that I can do to hold them."

"Papa's old pony is never held. He waits alone, while papa goes into the cottages."

"Yes, but papa's old pony is old, you see; which these ponies are not: and respectable; which these are not: and devoted to the family: which is the best of all—as this young lady would tell you."

All eyes were instantly directed toward "this young lady;" and Gabrielle found it somewhat difficult to bow with proper gravity to Mrs. Edgecumbe; who now appeared, followed by her husband.

"How do you do, Miss Gordon? So kind to think of me. Good-morning, Mr. Gordon. How do you do, Miss Wynn? Thank you, yes, I am quite comfortable. Edward, my love, the shawl, please—and the basket. Thank you—that will do. Oh! and, Edward"—in a lower tone—"don't let the children get to the green gooseberries; and Harry must dine on rice-pudding—nothing else, remember. Good-by, my darlings—give papa no trouble. Don't tire yourself in the parish, Edward. Thank you, Mr. Gordon. I am sorry to have kept you waiting. Pray drive on."

James did drive on, with a sarcastic turn of the lip and a gesture of disgust, for which Gabrielle felt herself at a loss to account. Mr. Edgecumbe stood at his gates, surrounded by his children, watching the carriage out of sight. Mrs. Edgecumbe was looking back, kissing her hand, and smiling. What could there be in all this, to irritate James?

"Gabrielle, I beg your pardon!" said he, suddenly, after a long pause; "I verily believe that I have not spoken since we left the vicarage. How any such inattention should be possible, in your presence, must remain an eternal mystery—"

"James," interposed Gabrielle, timidly.

"Gabrielle?"

"I have been wanting to ask you to give up talking nonsense to me—I mean, paying me compliments, and so on. I don't like it, even in fun. Please, if you can help it, never do it again."

"If I can help it?" repeated James, smiling: "What do you mean by that?"

"Why, I thought—as you are accustomed to so much society, and society where such nonsense is talked—that it might, by this time, have become a second nature with you. And I dare say that girls who are used to it, like it, and would like you all the better for it."

"But girls who are not used to it, dislike it, and would like me all the worse for it. Eh, Gabrielle? I stand rebuked. If you like, I'll make you a promise."

"What promise?"

"Never again to pay you a compliment, unless—"

"Yes?"

"Unless I mean it."

"Thank you," said Gabrielle, simply.

"But then, you, on the other hand, must promise not to feel yourself insulted, should you ever happen to be seated between two other young ladies, to each of whom, in turn, I make pretty speeches, while, with you, I am 'truthful even to bluntness.'"

"On the contrary, I should feel myself intensely relieved, and the other young ladies intensely to be pitied," said Gabrielle, laughing. "And now, since you have made this promise, I should like to ask you a question."

"Ask it. But first observe my faithfulness. I don't say, ask it, I shall esteem it an honor to answer any question of yours. Or—ask it, your slave is at your feet. Or any thing sweet, of that kind; but simply, ask it."

"Yes, I see you can keep your word! Will

you tell me what you meant last night, when you said—or, at least, when you implied—that my voice was a power?"

The light, half-satirical mood gave way. He became grave at once, and earnest.

"First, will you tell me why the art of singing well should not be a power—any more than the art of writing, painting, acting well?"

"I have always thought of singing—unprofessional singing—as a mere accomplishment," said Gabrielle.

"And what is the use of accomplishments?"

"What is their use? They are amusing—"

"Well?"

"They help to fill up spare time; they make home happy; they refresh one, after harder work."

"Yes, quite true. So much for accomplishments. Now put that term out of your head, and look at the subject in another light. We were speaking of singing. There are some who sing better than others; whose voices are uncultivated, what the generality of voices would not be, after years of training. Why is this?"

"They were created so."

"Exactly. It is a gift, a talent. Now, are not the mediocre voices fully capable to supply the ordinary requirements of society—to amuse, as you said, to heighten home-happiness, and the rest? Of course they are. Indeed, one seldom hears a voice that is not mediocre, or little better."

"Well?"

"Well, from this fact I deduce the maxim that, while minor talents may lawfully rest contented with minor ends, higher talents should make it their business to aim at higher ends—the highest. The commonplace should be left to the commonplace. Otherwise the inferior work is overdone, overrated, and the superior work is not done at all. The majority can't do it; the others won't."

James had stirred himself up into something that was almost excitement. He gave vent thereto by lashing, first one, then the other of the ponies, who forthwith, not inexcusably, proceeded to resent the same; tossing their heads, throwing up their hind-legs, and starting off in a furious gallop. Their master was obliged to exert some strength in restoring order. This cooled him, and, the ponies propitiated, he turned to Gabrielle with a smile.

"Well, now, Gabrielle, to descend from generals to particulars. Your own voice is not one of the mediocre voices; therefore, you should

pitch its standard on the mountain, not in the valley. You should aim, for example, at things beyond the reach of my sister Marian; who can sing prettily and sweetly, can keep a part, and can entertain visitors—no more."

"What are those things?"

"A little thought will soon show you. The influence of music is a hackneyed subject, and I can say nothing more about it than has been said already, over and over again. But every year of my life I am more deeply convinced that it really does exist—that good music does or may act with a practical power upon certain minds. It is for voices like yours, Gabrielle, to speak to such minds—to interpret to them such music. And you do not know what, by a right and studious use of this faculty, you may awaken—what of greatness, what of inspiration!"

Gabrielle was silent; but the color flashed up into her face.

"Well!" said James, after another long silence, "I shall take a great interest in your singing-lessons. I believe you will enjoy them. Yates is a clever fellow."

"Is he very impatient? I hope not."

"He can be very impatient on occasion. But I don't fancy he will be so with you. I should think you would make a pleasant pupil, Gabrielle. Your interests are so easily quickened; and, somehow or other, you have the knack of throwing yourself into what one says, in a manner, to say the least, flattering. I feel a strong inclination to teach you something myself. What is there, besides singing, that you would like to learn?"

"You have so little time," said Gabrielle, hesitating.

"Oh! never mind that. I have time for whatever I wish to do."

"There is one thing that I do very much want to learn—the organ. But I hardly like to take you at your word."

"The organ? Hurrah!" cried James. "Just what I should have chosen, supposing—as I rather hoped—that you had left the choice to me. Very well, Gabrielle; we will meet in the chapel every day, at six o'clock p. m. That will give us at least half an hour before you go to dress. Also, it is a musical time; and one not liable to be disturbed by visitors. This day month I shall ask which is your favorite master—Mr. Yates or Mr. Gordon. If I were now to inquire what you anticipate on that score, I suppose you would say, 'I don't know'—eh?"

"You had better inquire, and see."

"No, indeed. It will be some time before I hazard such another blow to my *amour propre*!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"... What have I with love to do?
Far sterner cares my lot pursue."

WALTER SCOTT.

ARRIVED at Rotherbridge—a prosperous country town, with wide streets and handsome shops—James bade farewell to the ladies, driving away in solitary glory. Mrs. Edgecumbe and Olivia were soon deep in the mysteries of ribbons, silks, and muslins; and Gabrielle, seated beside them at Bradley's counter, had full leisure to dream, and to ponder her conversational drive. She did not know what it was that made her so much happier than usual to-day, dissipating the *ennui*, the weary monotony, which had of late depressed her spirits. She did not try to analyze this sudden gleam of brightness. She only felt that she was anticipating her singing-lessons with great pleasure; and with pleasure still greater, those other lessons, to be given on the chapel organ.

Her thoughts thus agreeably occupied, she sat, for some time, with exemplary patience. But at length she began to weary, and to wish that Olivia would make haste to choose either the blue silk or the gray silk. She was therefore not sorry when a carriage stopped before the door—an open carriage, with a coat-of-arms on the panel, and two servants in dark livery off the box. From this carriage a lady and a young girl descended, entering the shop. The lady was short, and exceedingly fat; on either side her face hung profuse ringlets of the true flaxen shade; her eyes were very light and very large, and her cheeks were very rosy. She walked slowly—sighing now and then—to the counter, and sank into a chair, at a short distance from the Farnley trio. Gabrielle heard her ask, in a plaintive voice, addressing her daughter:

"Why are we come, my sweet Euphrosyne? What do we want? You are aware that I know nothing about it."

Euphrosyne, whose appearance did not quite embody the ideas awakened by her name, for she was all arms and legs, and awkwardnesses, "a growing girl" of fifteen—Euphrosyne, upon this, recalled her eyes, which had been roving toward Gabrielle. She took out a list of commissions, and proceeded to confide them to the shopman in attendance. The lady, meanwhile, unfolded a

fan, and made languid use of it, with an abstracted countenance. At this moment Mrs. Edgecumbe and Olivia rose to depart. Gabrielle was sorry; she would have liked to see a little more of the new-comers, whom she had watched with an unaccountable interest. And now, as she cast a parting glance in their direction, she perceived that the lady had put down the fan, had raised an eye-glass, and was looking toward herself. Also that Euphrosyne had turned from the shopman, to follow her mother's example.

Mrs. Edgecumbe, in no governed tones, had just been calling upon "Miss Gordon," and "Miss Wynn," to admire some remarkable shawl. This circumstance might have attracted the attention of the neighboring party; but why should they appear so strangely curious? The mystery was soon solved. Before Olivia had taken three steps, the lady rose, bowed slightly, and said in the plaintive voice:

"Pray forgive this intrusion; but did I not hear the name of Miss Gordon? and"—glancing at Gabrielle—"of Miss Wynn?"

Olivia assented, somewhat stiffly. Gabrielle stared.

"Perhaps Miss Wynn will allow me to introduce myself. She may have heard of me from a dear nephew, Charles Godfrey—Lady Louisa Pembroke, his mother's only sister."

"Oh! yes," exclaimed Gabrielle, brightening and flushing; "I have heard of you often. You are his godmother too, I think."

"Excuse me for sitting down—my feelings overpower my strength. Yes, I am his godmother; and this dear girl is his cousin.—Shake hands with Miss Wynn, my sweet Euphrosyne.—We saw Charlie last week, Miss Wynn, at Oxford. We have spent the last fourteen years abroad; and, unfortunately, before we left England, my poor darling husband disagreed with Charlie's father; and, his beloved mother being gone, we lost sight of him for a time. However, I have hunted him out. I love him for his mother's sake. You can imagine a sister's feelings, Miss Wynn. You cannot know them, because—so Charlie tells me—you are an only child. But perhaps you can imagine them?"

This question, and the inquiring pause which followed, embarrassed Gabrielle. She blushed; whereupon, for some reason, Lady Louisa's lips parted in a pensive smile.

"I promised that I would lose no time in making your acquaintance. He told me so much about you, and about your poor father's kindness. I have taken Lorton Court, about four miles from

Farnley. I shall hope to see you there frequently. It will make me so happy to—. But I am keeping you from your cousin. I suppose, for the present, we had better say adieu."

She bestowed a feeling pressure on Gabrielle's hand; and so the interview closed. Gabrielle rejoined Olivia at the shop-door; to be questioned—and congratulated.

"You will have abundant opportunity now for meeting Mr. Godfrey. I am so very glad, dear. No doubt James will wish me to call as soon as possible"—etc., etc.

In short, so overwhelming was Olivia's pleasure, that—a fact unparalleled in the annals of her life—she passed, without seeing, the hotel where she and her companions were to lunch.

Some hours afterward, James Gordon, crossing the street, caught sight of his sister in a shop, and entered. He had finished his business, and he wanted to get home. He should like to know how much longer this dreadful shopping was to last? As he spoke, his eye wandered to the opposite end of the counter, where Gabrielle stood. It was strange, he thought—especially after so very brief a separation—that he should feel such pleasure in seeing her face again.

Olivia was right; she *was* rather pretty. At any rate, she had something better than mere prettiness. What a radiant smile, as, in answer to a remark of Mrs. Edgcombe's, she raised her eyes! And, when she lowered them, how well that meditative air became her! Yes, certainly—sometimes—in expression—it was almost a beautiful face.

"Gabrielle had a pleasant surprise this morning," said Olivia: while he lingered, leaning against the door-post, silently gazing into that far corner of the shop; "a Lady Louisa Pembroke, a relation of that young Mr. Godfrey—you remember Mr. Godfrey?"

Yes, James remembered. As Olivia spoke, a faint shadow stole over his mind: another remembrance—why so unpalatable?—of something that Mr. Lascelles, his co-executor, had said, months ago, in the study at Eversfield.

"Well! What of him?" asked James, withdrawing his eyes from the far corner, and looking out into the street.

"Nothing of him—did you not hear? We only encountered his aunt; and—think how nice for Gabrielle!—she is living at Lorton."

"Why particularly nice for Gabrielle?"

"She will meet Mr. Godfrey there, stupid boy."

"And what of that?"

"James! Surely you know! There is evidently an attachment between them. No one who saw him when she was ill could doubt it on his side; and no one who heard Gabrielle talk of him, could doubt it on hers. Indeed, from all I have observed, I feel certain that he is only waiting for his ordination to declare himself. And very delightful it will be, dear child, to have her settled for life at Meddiscombe."

"How you run on, Olivia! You are a true woman—always jumping to conclusions, and always thinking about love."

"But, James, indeed—I have excellent reasons: let me tell you. . . . Where are you going, James?"

"To fetch the carriage. We should have started an hour ago!"

And before his sister, taken by surprise, could say any thing more, he was half-way down the street.

What folly, to be sure! Olivia was as romantic as a school-girl. And yet . . . But no—the idea was too absurd! Though wherein this extreme absurdity might consist, James did not stop to determine.

"What a nuisance love is!" he said to himself, as he strode on at a furious pace. "I abhor the whole thing from my soul. If Cupid were a reality, and I had him here, I would blow out his brains. Confound it all!"

Those who marvelled at the grayness of James Gordon's head, as compared with the greenness of his shoulders, would have marvelled less had they seen him at this moment; perhaps, even, would have begun to question whether indeed such grayness existed. A gleam of the natural fire of his five-and-twenty years was flashing, for once in a way, from the recesses where that fire usually slumbered. He did not look at all like a philosopher, as he entered the inn-yard.

But the gleam soon died out; the calmness and self-restraint returned. He ordered the carriage; then relapsed into a more meditative mood.

"I don't see what concern it is of mine"—he soliloquized—"to provoke me so absurdly! But, certainly, it seems ten thousand pities for a girl of that sort—able, as I could not have believed, in a girl—to appreciate higher things, to go and spoil all by settling down, so early, into a commonplace domestic character; to live only for her husband and her children, and her household affairs, to the end of the chapter. I had begun to feel some slight interest in her, some

desire to help in the development of her mind. Yes—ten thousand pities it would be! However, I trust that it is only one of Olivia's little romances. She may be right, indeed, so far as Godfrey goes—boys of his age are such asses!" (The gulf which divided James from this asinine age was exactly two years in width!) "But if Gabrielle return it, I am disappointed in her: that's all."

Thus when, a quarter of an hour later, Gabrielle resumed her place in the carriage, she found James's humor considerably changed; and that not for the better. He was moody and abstracted; neither, until the drive was half-over, did he evince any desire to second her attempts at conversation. Then, looking fixedly at the off-pony's head, he remarked:

"You met an old friend at Bradley's, I hear?"

"Not an old friend. Only a relation of an old friend."

He glanced at her as she spoke, and saw that her countenance did not change. No blush, no emotion of any sort, was visible. He began to hope that he might not have to be so very much disappointed after all.

"I met Charlie Godfrey's aunt. You have heard of Charlie Godfrey? He lived at Eversfield for years, and we are quite like brother and sister. So of course I am glad to make his aunt's acquaintance."

"Yes, naturally. Olivia must call on her," said James; and Gabrielle could not but observe the sudden geniality of his manner. She felt equally at a loss to account for the cloud and for its removal; but she rejoiced to see sunshine once more; and all went "merry as a marriage-bell" during the remainder of the drive.

"You are beginning to get on better, dear, with James," remarked Olivia, the same evening.

"Yes," was Gabrielle's sole reply. She sat looking dreamily into the fire, with folded hands; from which the book she had been reading had fallen unnoticed, sliding down upon the hearth-rug.

"He has promised to teach me the organ. Is it not kind in him?" she said, some twenty minutes later, her attitude unchanged.

"In whom?" inquired Olivia. Since that gentle little "Yes" was spoken, she, in spirit, had wandered far and wide—to the schools, to the cottages, to the vicarage, to her absent sisters. Thus the "him" was somewhat incomprehensible.

"I was speaking of James," said Gabrielle, as she stooped to pick up her book.

"JAMES!" cried Olivia, breathlessly—"JAMES has promised to teach you the organ?"

"Yes. It was quite his own proposal," answered Gabrielle; feeling rather guilty, as she saw Olivia's extreme astonishment.

"Well, if he proposed it, he means it," Olivia returned, tating fast. "And I am sure I am very glad; he works his brain so hard, and this will be some recreation for him. But, Gabrielle, if you knew him better, you would agree that his proposing such a thing is most extraordinary. He is usually so entirely wrapped up in his own pursuits. Perhaps, though, he means to turn over a new leaf, and to be more sociable."

It seemed so, indeed. From this time forward, James bestowed a good deal of his company on Olivia and Gabrielle. He seldom, certainly, appeared in the morning; but, after luncheon, he walked or drove with them; and his evenings, when he did not dine out, were invariably spent in the drawing-room. Gabrielle soon learned to anticipate these evenings, as the pleasantest part of the day.

The organ-lessons were also a source of great enjoyment. The first of these took place on the day after the drive to Rotherbridge. It was growing dusk when Gabrielle followed James down the stone-flagged passage to the chapel. The angels standing beside the organ held in each hand a wax-light, which diffused a faint radiance through the choir; but the rest of the building was in shadow. A feeling of awe crept over Gabrielle, as she entered the silent aisle, and saw the marble monuments standing out clear and white against the east window—its colors indiscernible now. She would not care, she thought, at this hour of the evening, to be in the chapel alone.

"Gabrielle, I believe you are frightened. Silly child! What is there to hurt you?" said James. "Give me your hand; you might stumble; these steps are rather awkward."

He took her hand in his, and held it fast; and the awe fled away.

"How could he tell what I was thinking?" she questioned secretly.

"Now will you sit down," he said, as they reached the organ, "and let me hear you try that first exercise in the book before you? But stop a minute."

"Why are you waiting?" she asked, after a considerable pause. "I am ready."

"In one sense, perhaps; but, Gabrielle—"

"Yes."

"What have I done to make you afraid of me?"

This was an unexpected inquiry. Gabrielle glanced at him, met his eyes, lowered her own, blushed, and answered nothing.

"You will neither get on, nor enjoy the lesson, if you are nervous. I sha'n't lose my patience—are you thinking of that?—or supposing I did, even; would it matter?"

"Not in reality, I dare say," began Gabrielle. Then—as James laughed, quoting under his breath, "Truthful even unto bluntness"—she added, boldly: "I own I do sometimes feel a little—a little dread of you: not fear—it does not amount to fear. But you are so cynical, so quick to see any thing which does not come up to your own standard, that I naturally feel rather doubtful as to what you may be satirizing or condemning in me."

"But, Gabrielle"—and his tone was strangely earnest—"if I promise that I will never satirize nor condemn any thing in you, unless I do so openly, won't you believe it?"

"Yes; but then I shall consider myself equally bound to be open with respect to you," said Gabrielle, suddenly saucy.

"Of course. That is only fair."

And thus the lesson began.

Directly it was over, she ran to her room, and dressed with all possible alacrity. Then, hastening down-stairs again, she extinguished her candle, and reopened the baize door which led to the chapel. One moment she paused, irresolute; the next, she stepped into the passage, closed the door, and shut herself in with the darkness. She was determined to conquer that foolish awe which had previously overpowered her—which had drawn from James the exclamation of "Silly child!" She groped her way to the chapel-door; and here she paused again.

All was very still; the sounds of the household could not penetrate to this retired spot. The wind was sighing down the passage behind her, moaning through the aisle before her, waking unearthly music in the chinks and crannies of the windows. The marble monuments stood out as before; only more weird and ghost-like. Weird and ghost-like, also, when her eye had accustomed itself to the darkness, looked all the rest. Nevertheless, she entered bravely, wrestling with the nervousness which continually urged her to turn and fly back to the hall and the light. She advanced toward the chancel—nearer to those awful monuments—nearer to the solemn angels holding the candlestick. Suddenly the baize door swung on its hinges. She started and trembled. A footstep was approaching, but

without a light. Another moment, and her trembling ceased; she had discerned, had recognized the figure.

"Who on earth is that?" exclaimed James's voice.

"Only I," she answered, smiling to herself.

"Gabrielle! Why!"—and his tone betrayed no small amount of surprise—"you were afraid when it was dusk merely, and when I was with you."

"I know I was afraid; I wanted to master it, so I thought I would come alone. I will go back now."

"Stop a moment—I'll light a candle. It is not safe for you to be stumbling among these seats alone. I was going to play a little in the dark, till dinner-time. How tiresome these matches are!"

He had struck two or three without success; at length one consented to burn. The flickering light revealed Gabrielle, looking almost as white as the monuments; and James, with an unwonted flush on his face, an unusual gleam in his eye.

"Here, let me light you to the hall," said he, taking a candle from its niche.

"Thank you. I am sorry to be so troublesome. I could find my way quite well alone."

James made no answer. He followed her, holding the light on high. At the end of the passage he paused, and said:

"Gabrielle, I liked you before; but now you have made me respect you."

And from this moment he ceased to patronize Gabrielle—either in manner, in words, or in smile.

CHAPTER IX.

"Tis sin,

Nay, profanation, to keep in,
When as a thousand virgins on this day,
Spring sooner than the lark to fetch in May!

Come, we'll abroad; and let's obey
The proclamation made for May,
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying!"

ROBERT HERRICK.

MAY opened for Gabrielle under happier auspices than any previous month of this year. It was a true May-Day: hawthorn in the hedges, violets and primroses on the banks; a cloudless sky, lambs bleating, birds singing. Gabrielle rose early, and sallied forth into the park.

"It is a long time," she said to herself, "since

I have been so happy. I feel inclined to skip and run, like those lambs. I wonder whether I could catch one—dear little things! They look so white and pretty. I must really try."

She walked on tiptoe toward a tiny lamb, which had wandered some paces from its companions, and was nibbling at the grass, in happy unconsciousness of her vicinity. She had reached, and in another moment might have touched it, when it lifted its head, took fright, and scampered off at its utmost speed. Gabrielle, impelled by a childish impulse, followed in pursuit; and was only recalled to her senses by a strange, hoarse laugh, which made her start, stop short, and look about her.

"Chasing a lamb—haw?" said Mr. Morris, rising from beneath a tree. He held in his hand a large Bible, overflowing with papers: several of which fell, as he stood up, and fluttered to the grass. Another volume, still larger, lay on the wooden bench where he had been sitting; and a third, a voluminous manuscript, protruded from a pocket of his coat. "Hopeless business. Better give it up. Lambs less easily tired than young ladies!"

He spoke—as he generally spoke—in a gusty, sing-song tone; looking away—far beyond Gabrielle. She was not at first sure that he recognized her.

"I did not really expect to catch it," she said, laughing. "The morning is so lovely; I wanted an excuse for a run."

"Ah! at your age a run is all very well. Glad you have spirits for it. Some time since that has been the case—haw! Won't you sit down?" He moved the great book, and made a place for Gabrielle on the bench; of which, somewhat tired and breathless, she was thankful to avail herself. Then, having collected his scattered papers, he installed himself at her side. "Some time since that has been the case," he repeated, when he was settled to his satisfaction, his back against the tree. "Your spirits have been low: great languor and depression. Something weighing on your mind—haw?"

"I lost my father barely six months ago," said Gabrielle, her eyes filling.

"Ah! But it is selfish to lament the dead. Happy for them! Happy for them!"

"Surely selfish is too hard a word?" said Gabrielle, gently.

"Well, we won't call it selfish; we'll call it inconsiderate. Short-sighted; the separation is very transient. They leave school, half a year, as it were, before ourselves. We have a few

more lessons still to learn. Then we shall leave too."

He paused, and the dreaminess deepened in his eyes.

"But we miss them. Oh, yes, we miss them. We must. That, in itself, is a part of our education. There are alleviations, however. Now you can't think"—and his tone suddenly changed—"what consolation I find in my treatise!"

He took the manuscript from his pocket; handling it lovingly. It was closely written, interlined, corrected and recorrected.

"At least, the treatise, strictly speaking, have not yet begun; but the introduction, as you see, has made some little progress. The Ten Tribes"—he went on, looking out into the trees—"the Ten Tribes, their possible settlement, their possible posterity, form an absorbing topic for meditation and for research. I had intended, should your melancholy continue, to propose to your consideration some subject of a similar nature. But you are young; and there is a wonderful buoyancy, thank God! in the young. It will not be necessary now."

Once more he paused. Gabrielle saw that he was a little confused; and more than a little agitated.

"I have been wishing," he added—"I have been wishing, for some days, to speak to you—to ask you—"

"Yes?" she said, after a long interval: during which, to all appearance, he had forgotten that his sentence remained unfinished.

"To ask you," he resumed, with his peculiar start, "about a young man called Godfrey. I heard Miss Gordon mention him, in connection with you. And I thought—fact is, I knew some Godfreys, once, myself; I should like to ascertain whether this youth belongs to the family."

"He is the son of a Colonel Godfrey, who was killed, a long time ago, in India. His grandmother, Lady Godfrey, brought him up; they lived at Eversfield."

"There still?"

"Oh no. Lady Godfrey has been dead some years, and Charlie is at Oxford. He has a nominal home with an uncle, in the vacations; but he will soon be independent. He hopes to be ordained at Christmas; and a living is waiting for him; Meddiscombe—you know it, of course? It is only a mile or two from here."

"Coming to Meddiscombe?—Ah!—"

The pause was very long, this time; and his eyes seemed to have wandered quite beyond this world, and to be looking into the next.

"He has no mother?" came out presently, in an odd jerk.

"No; she died when he was a baby."

"Ah! I knew a Colonel Godfrey, once. I wonder if it were the same? A harsh man. Harsh and dissipated."

"So was Charlie's father, I fear. I have been told that his mother married out of pique, and did not care for her husband. Anyhow, Colonel Godfrey grew tired of her, and neglected her; and she faded gradually away. She was very pretty, and very young: only one-and-twenty when she died."

"He grew tired of her?—Ah!—"

"Are you ill?" cried Gabrielle, much alarmed; "shall I run to that cottage and get some water?"

"Thanks," said poor Mr. Morris, struggling for breath; and to the cottage Gabrielle flew. She returned in less than two minutes, with a cracked mug, which she had greatly astonished an old woman by snatching from a table. Mr. Morris drank the greater portion of its contents; the rest he transferred, in his dreamy manner, to his forehead and his palms. After this he sat down, panted, sighed, patted his chest three times, and was himself again. "Thanks," he repeated—"a spasm. I am subject to spasms. Something connected with the heart, I am told. Sorry have troubled you. Pray allow me to carry that back."

Still looking out, far away, he extended his hand; and so held it for several moments, as though he expected to receive therein the mug. At length, however, receiving nothing, and conscious, probably, of some degree of exhaustion, he slowly withdrew it; and subsided into reverie. Meanwhile Gabrielle had returned to and from the cottage, had restored the mug, and had pacified the old woman. Now, standing by his side, she offered her arm to conduct him home. Had he not better come at once, and send for the doctor?

"The doctor!" reverberated Mr. Morris, in a stentorian tone. "No, thank you," he added, more quietly; "there is no doctor in this world for me. Your arm!—I should crush you, my dear. No, you've done all you can. Thanks—very many thanks. Go to your breakfast. We shall meet in the chapel, presently . . . Ask you more another time, if you'll let me, about young Godfrey. Just now I am too weak for any thing but my Bible and the treatise."

Too weak for Charlie Godfrey, and yet not too weak for the treatise! Gabrielle walked

slowly homeward, pondering this problem. She was pondering it still, when she arrived within sight of the house, and her attention was diverted by certain strains—proceeding, apparently, from the united efforts of a fiddle, a flute, and an accordeon. Quickening her pace, she reached her destination only just in time to avoid entanglement among a little throng of people who had marched from the village to pay their May-Day devoirs to the "squire." James and Olivia were waiting, ready to receive them, upon the steps; and in the background crowded the servants, peering over one another's shoulders, eager to get a glimpse of the May queen. The May queen was not, however, the most conspicuous object in the procession. That honor was reserved for the May-pole—a huge mass of green, with a flag and a gay knot of ribbons streaming from the summit. The May queen stood beneath it, suffused in blushes, a little oppressed, apparently, by the weight of her hawthorn crown. She was a modest-looking girl, a beauty in her way, as was undoubtedly the opinion of the young man at her elbow; whom Gabrielle recognized as one of the under-keepers. Proud and pleased, in the last degree, he appeared; casting toward her continual glances of exulting admiration, which did not escape the spectators on the steps. Gabrielle heard James, in a contemptuous undertone, observe: "Poor Rogers!—he is very far gone!"

"Their banns are to be published next Sunday, I hear. How happy they both seem!" said Olivia.

"Quite delightful, isn't it?" returned James, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Then he turned to Gabrielle, and directed her attention to the contortions which accompanied the minstrelsy; to the frowns of the man with the fiddle, the cheeks of the man with the flute, the sentiment of the man with the accordeon. Gabrielle laughed, but—she hardly knew why—she felt as though a cloud had passed over her spirit.

A mighty voice now struck up a song, which had been composed for the occasion; and the whole party, the May queen not excepted, joined in the chorus with overpowering zeal:

"Coom! let us hail t' moonth o' May,
W! jollity and glee!
Sweet Nature smolles ter see this day.
And soos maun we.
T' lombs is skipping t' fields,
T' skoylark's soaring holgh abun us,
To wheer t' soon, w! kindly oles,
Casts doon a shoining look upon us.
Chorus—Coom, etc.

"We'll let dissensions be, awhile,
And put us' troubles boy;
This day we'll rescue out o' toil
And spend i' joy.
We'll crown us' queen, and set her throon
Beneath t' May-pole's friendly shadder;
And then we'll dance, and every step
Shall mak' us' hearts and voices gladder.

Chorus—Coom, etc.

"God bless us' squire, and all as live
Within these anshyant walls,
And health and wealth forever give
To Farnley's halls!
And many Mays may ye behooald,
And many toimes, i' bliss unoitng,
Yer voices w' us' chorus join,
To koindliness and mirth inviting!
Chorus—Coom, etc."

The song finished, every eye was fixed upon James; who, stepping forward, proceeded to deliver the speech which was evidently expected of him. He begged to thank all present, in his sister's name and in his own, for the honor of this annual visit, and for their kind wishes. He expressed his satisfaction in the observance of the good old customs—an observance which served to link past and present together, and to foster national and neighborly feelings. He spoke of the pleasure he experienced in beholding so many "old familiar faces;" and of his hope that these faces might long continue to brighten the May-Day festivities. Finally, he praised the song and the singing, and congratulated the company generally, on their taste in the selection of their queen; and he trusted that her majesty would condescend to accept from him the gift of a gown—might it become her only half as well as the crown which she wore at present!

This oration was followed by vigorous cheers for "t' squire;" and afterward for "Miss Gordon," and "t' yoong ledly." Rogers was then beckoned to James's side, and intrusted with the wherewithal for the purchase of the gown: as also with a larger sum, to be divided among the Mayers. They departed, well-pleased, in procession, as they had come; the music resounding in their wake.

"Now, I shall be by no means averse to some breakfast," said James, entering the house. "Gabrielle, how did you like the song? It was composed by our poet laureate—*alias*, the carpenter—*alias*, the man with the accordeon."

"I could hardly understand the jargon of it," said Gabrielle.

"I won't have you call my beloved Yorkshire tongue a jargon," replied James, proceeding to quote:

"The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, *Yorkshire*,
And a' that thou hast done for me!"

To go to another subject, Gabrielle? Are you fond of school-feasts?"

"Very *indeed*," said Gabrielle, emphatically.

"There will be one this afternoon, on the green."

"Of James's giving," added Olivia.

"Oh, may I play with the children?" cried Gabrielle—so earnestly, that both her cousins laughed.

"Certainly, Gabrielle; your presence will do them infinite honor," said James. "And, if you like, I'll send into Rotherbridge for a doll and a Noah's ark, and a top or two, wherewith you can solace yourself here, when the feast is over, and your playfellows are gone."

"Now, James," interposed Olivia; "that is not fair. She ought not to be teased for taking interest in a good cause. I would far rather see her enthusiastic about it, than like Miss Featherstone. Do you remember how bored Miss Featherstone seemed last year? I quite repented of inviting her."

"Ay, but Gabrielle and Miss Featherstone are two. Olivia, what do you say to a ride this morning? I feel in a lazy humor; and I don't see why, for once, I should not indulge it—the day being May-Day, and the weather May weather."

"I can't possibly go out myself before luncheon," said Olivia. "But take Gabrielle. A ride will do her good."

"Thank you," said Gabrielle. "I am very sorry—I don't ride."

"Don't ride?" exclaimed James. "Why? Do you dislike it?"

"Oh! no. I should like it, I am sure; but I can't. I have never had an opportunity. Excepting that once, for a month, when I was ill, John Lee lent me his old donkey."

"And you would not condescend to be my pupil in another branch of art?" said James, smiling. "Because, if you would, we have a superannuated pony, just the thing for you to begin upon."

Olivia stared, and Gabrielle protested that she could not think of giving so much trouble.

"There would be no trouble in the case," returned James. "I should simply, two or three times, walk by the pony's side, until you knew

how to manage him; and then, two or three more times, ride by his side, until I could trust you alone. That, in such weather, would be pleasure, not trouble. So don't refuse for my sake."

Gabrielle, thus pressed, glanced toward Olivia; but Olivia was stooping to pick up her handkerchief. At this moment the butler happened to enter, and James ordered the pony.

"Then that is settled, Gabrielle," he said, as Wilcox retired. "You and I are going a-Maying, like the rest of the world."

Gabrielle remembered all that Olivia had told her of the immensity of James's business; and she felt herself exceedingly guilty. To divert attention from the riding-lesson, she related the history of Mr. Morris's sudden attack; which the episode of the Mayers had, until now, driven from her mind. Her cousins, somewhat to her surprise, listened with perfect composure. They assured her that these "spasms" were of frequent occurrence, and apparently harmless; leaving no ill effects. Shortly afterward the prayer-bell rang, and the trio repaired to the chapel. Mr. Morris appeared in his usual place, conducting the service with as strong a voice, as gusty a delivery, as ever; and Gabrielle's uneasiness on his account vanished in thin air.

"James," said Olivia, when prayers were over, and Gabrielle was gone to equip herself in an old riding-habit of Marian's—"James, you have been very kind in attending to what I told you about Gabrielle, and you have done her great good; and I think, now—"

"What did you tell me about Gabrielle?—and when?" asked James, evidently in the dark.

"Why, don't you remember? I thought it was that which had made you take such pains lately to please her. Don't you remember my begging you to go into the drawing-room and try to cheer her up? I was about to say, there can be no further occasion, now that she is better and happier—dear child!—for you to spend so much time on her. Unselfish as you are, James, I know that you must feel these constant attentions a burden."

"Does Gabrielle feel them a burden?" was James's sole reply.

"Gabrielle! How could she?"

"When Gabrielle feels them a burden they shall cease," responded James, and turned away.

Olivia was considerably mystified; but she said no more: going meekly up-stairs to inspect the fit of Marian's habit.

Somewhat formidable, in Gabrielle's eyes, appeared the pony, when, descending, she found

him saddled and bridled at the hall-door; albeit that, never vicious, he was now, as James had said, superannuated, being very old, and a little blind, and entirely devoid of spirit. But Gabrielle was not sufficiently experienced to discover all this at first sight: and he was, for a pony, tall—much taller than John Lee's donkey. Moreover, he had a habit of pawing the ground—a remnant of olden times: and in this habit he was indulging, when Gabrielle reached the door. Her courage, at no time physically high, sank—as Wilcox approached with a chair, and James inquired if she were ready—to an unusually low ebb. She would not, however, for the world, have confessed her fears—weak and foolish as she knew them to be. And when she was fairly installed in the saddle, while James, correcting some defect in her method of holding the reins, stood at her side, the fears began to melt. She soon felt as much at home with the pony as she had felt with the donkey, in days gone by.

The first twenty minutes were occupied in instructions of an equestrian nature; the pony maintaining a leisurely walk, with which James kept pace. Presently they came to anchor under an elm, in a retired lane. Here the pony resorted to such quiet grazing as circumstances would allow; and James, taking off his hat, reclined against the bank, on the summit of which grew the tree. In the air floated innumerable insects, with a continuous drowsy hum. An odor of violets came from the hedge-row; a thrush was singing in a neighboring copse; in distant fields lambs were bleating, cattle were lowing; farther still, a boy was calling to the birds that flocked about the young corn. The peaceful English prospect—dales and uplands, abundant in spring tints, a silver thread of a river, here and there a church-steeple, a farm-house, a cluster of cottages, all etherealized in the gray morning haze—formed a fair picture. And to this picture, James, as he leaned against the bank, his eyes—somewhat uplifted—glowing with that half-inspired expression which came over them at times—was no unworthy adjunct. Neither, indeed, was Gabrielle; for, although not beautiful, her face was yet so fair, so fresh, so sweet, and many an established belle might have been thankful to possess her supple figure and girlish grace.

So thought James; while she, all unconscious, sat looking out over the landscape, thinking how lovely it was, how sweetly the thrush sang, how much lay around her for which to rejoice, to thank God!

"I am sorry," she said, "that weather like this comes so seldom, and lasts so short a time. There is something so elevating in it—something that makes one so much better, so much happier!"

"Happier, perhaps: better—that I doubt. To me, now, this weather is enervating, not elevating. I feel indisposed to exertion, tempted to sink into a state of passive enjoyment—a *doles far niente*, which would soon send all higher faculties to sleep."

"Do you? Well, I dare say that such beauty and serenity for a long time together would not be good. Still, for the time we have it, I think it does elevate rather than lower. At least," she said, in a lower tone, "it does with me. It draws me nearer God."

"How?"

"It makes me think of Him, and thank Him for giving us so many beautiful things, and hearts to enjoy them. And then, this season always seems a type of heaven, of the resurrection," added Gabrielle, coloring.

"Well, that may be all very true," said James, after a pause of some minutes; "but, to me, the expression 'near God' necessarily implies some participation, however slight, in the Divine nature. The nearer that any man, morally and intellectually, approaches toward perfection, the nearer also he approaches toward God. Now, no perfection, moral or intellectual, can be attained without strong effort; which, in its turn, requires strong mental energy. Therefore, whatever tends to diminish mental energy, must also tend to increase our distance from perfection; and consequently from God. All this seems too grandiloquent, perhaps, for our present subject; but I am certain that the surest road to success in the attainment of any aim, lies in pursuing that aim in little things, as in great things—in never, for one instant, losing sight of it. And thus, this languid pleasure, the effect of the weather, is, to my mind, rather degrading than otherwise. It is a pleasure, moreover, which we share with the brutes—with these midges even!"

"But the midges cannot feel grateful," said Gabrielle; "they cannot rise, through its means, to higher things. They enjoy the sunshine as sunshine, the physical comfort as physical comfort, and no more."

"Yes, our enjoyment is superior to theirs in degree; but I doubt if it be much so in kind. However, Gabrielle, you mustn't set me down as a misanthrope. I believe pleasure in moderation to be beneficial—harmless, at any rate. Besides,

it is not for all to aim at that perfection for which effort so unbending is required. Many—the majority—have no desire to surpass their fellow-men; and let those enjoy themselves, luxuriate, as they will. But the few who set their standard higher, must climb higher, as I remarked to you before."

Gabrielle made no answer. She felt mystified, though not convinced. Her silence passed unnoticed by James, who was absorbed in his own thoughts.

"Give me tempestuous weather," he said, after a while—"roughness, literally and figuratively. With opposition rises strength—the more of difficulty, the more of glory. To press through, come what may, to reach the calm above—that is a worthy ambition. For that a man may well sacrifice all else—all which would hinder him, or lead him to rest satisfied with any thing lower."

His dark eyes shone, as by some hidden fire; his faced flushed; he rose unconsciously to his full height, as though he saw a host of foes in tangible form before him, and were resolved to oppose them—to the death even.

Gabrielle was astonished. This glimpse into his inner life startled, almost alarmed her. She did not know what to make of it; moreover, it appeared so strange a contrast to his outer life, to all that she saw of him day by day: to his agreeable manner, his easy smile, his coolness and equanimity. She sat meditative and perplexed, with a vague consciousness that there was, somewhere, something mistaken in his ideas; yet also something noble, something higher than in those of the generality of people.

Meanwhile, her steed had tired of grazing, and had resorted to his trick of pawing the ground. James, recalled thereby to sublunary things, proposed that the cavalcade should move on. Then, quite his usual self again—Gabrielle assenting—he adjusted her bridle, and led the pony back into the road.

CHAPTER X.

"What prudence with the old and wise:
What grace in youthful gayeties;
In all how sage!"

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

PROCEEDING down the lane, they presently encountered an old man, mounted on a spirited horse, and followed by a bevy of dogs. He wore a buff coat and waistcoat, light-colored cords, gaiters, and huge hobnailed boots. His face was

hard and stolid: the complexion weather-beaten; the blue eyes small and keen; the forehead knotty, bordered on either side by tufts of thick gray hair. The features might have been carved from some rugged rock upon his native moors.

On perceiving James, he drew in his horse, and raised his brown straw hat. No smile, no change of any kind, relaxed the rigid countenance. But a certain rough courtesy lurked in his manner, as he turned to Gabrielle and acknowledged her presence by a bow.

"O wor boun' ta t' park, sir, ta speak ta yersen. Doctor says as ma lad can't last mooch longer. Not as o thinks owt ta wot doctor says! but o can see wi' me oies. An' he'd loik ta see yer afqor he goos: soo' o thout o'd let yo knooaw."

"I'll try to get over to-morrow, Holt. Does he suffer much?"

"He dooan't suffer mooch wi' pain, loike; it's wakeness an' t' cough. An' he wiern't lig i' bed. He wur allus a outdooar lad; an' o' days loike thissen, e can't keep him i' t' house. He's gi'en a deal o' trouble i' s' toime, but that's all o'er. O maun let by-gones be by-gones, o reckon."

"You'll not repent it, Holt, when he's gone."

"Mebbe not, as ta t' lad. But if e ever gets hooald o' them as has led him astroy, o'll serve 'em out, an' nooa mistake—sooa e will! Only they'd a let him be, he'd a lived ta shoot ma oies, as he oughter, an' takken t' farm efther me, as o did ether ma feyther. An' nah, he's a wasting an' a wasting! If e could, o'd sap t' loives o' their lads, as they've sapped t' loife o' moine. O'll ne'er forgi' 'em."

James shook his head.

"You will feel differently, in a few months' time, Holt," said he. "That way of thinking is not right. We'll talk it over to-morrow."

"All t' talking i' t' universe wiern't change me, sir. Nobbut wot ye'r welcome ta say wot ye've a moind to say. O'm deeply indebted ta yer, Mester Gordon. If it hadn't a been for yo, he'd happen never a sin's whooam again. Sooa yo'll coom to-morrow, an' good-day ta yer, sir.—Good-day, miss."

Setting abrupt spurs to his horse, the old man wheeled round, and rode rapidly away, in the direction from which he had come; pursued by the dogs, all barking—and a cloud of dust.

"That's a curious old specimen of humanity," said James, looking after him; "there is something grand about him, too—something above the average. I can't help rather admiring that

unrelenting spirit, though I feel myself in duty bound to preach its enormity, as best I can."

"Poor old man—I pity him so very much!" cried Gabrielle; "how I wish I could do something to comfort him!"

"My dear Gabrielle," said James, with a smile, "the comfort for which he is thirsting, is beyond your comprehension. In his present state, nothing short of revenge would be any comfort to him. And, indeed, I can scarcely wonder. I never knew a finer young fellow than that son of his, a year or two ago. But he was weak, and flush of money, and he got among bad company, who enticed him into ways of gambling and drinking, and a good deal besides. At last he became entangled in a poaching row, and was sent to jail. Now old Holt looks upon the game laws as fully equal, if not superior, to the Ten Commandments; it was something of the Brutus feeling, I fancy, that made him disown his son forthwith. He even refused to pay the fine; the poor fellow had to serve out his month on the tread-mill. Afterward, he grew reckless, and went from bad to worse. I fear that the life which he has been leading at Rotherbridge would not bear examination."

"And you reconciled him to his father. I don't wonder they are grateful."

"Grateful!" said James, smiling carelessly. "Is it not a squire's business to promote peace, so far as he has opportunity, among his tenants? It was rather hard work, though, in this instance. I thought that old man's stolidity would never give way. But it gave way at last. Can you fancy him, Gabrielle, bowing his head on the table, and sobbing like a child?"

"Oh, did he?"

"He did, indeed. You are getting melancholy, though; we'll change the subject. Look at that butterfly. What a splendid fellow!"

But Gabrielle scarcely raised her eyes.

"I can't throw off things all in a minute," she said. "And it is so very sad. Can nothing be done for them?"

"Nothing more than has been done. The young man must die; and the old man must lament him: these are inevitable facts. Why, the world is full of such tragedies. If you take them all to heart in this way, you may as well determine to 'never smile again.'"

Gabrielle was silent.

"You think me unfeeling," pursued James. "But, depend on it, pity, where pity is unavailing, deteriorates the mind. You should read what Abercrombie says about that, in his 'Moral

Feelings.' There are no people on earth so practically selfish as those tender individuals, whose compassions are always being moved by imaginary ills, or by ills impossible to relieve."

"I think you are rather like old Holt," exclaimed Gabrielle, more vindictively than James had ever heard her speak.

He laughed, and demanded to know wherein the resemblance consisted.

"You are hard," she returned. "What you say is true; but you say it coldly. You want softness. And you will get it, I hope, some day."

"By having a son like Anthony Holt to drink and poach, and wear the life out of me, till my gray hairs come with sorrow to the grave? Thank you, Gabrielle. When that catastrophe befalls me, you will know that your kind wishes have helped to bring it about."

He looked at Gabrielle; but Gabrielle would not smile. No, after all—he was not her ideal hero! He might be *sans peur*; but, with this lack of tenderness, he could never be *sans reproche*.

So she thought for the space of ten minutes, or, perhaps, of a quarter of an hour. After that, his imperceptible efforts to restore her equanimity; his gentleness, when he corrected certain defects in her riding; his agreeableness, as he passed to the discussion of other topics; and—must it be admitted?—his handsomeness not the least: united to dissipate the cloud—and he became her Admirable Crichton once more.

In the afternoon, Olivia and Gabrielle repaired to the village green; which, be it observed, was a model green, fashioned, under James's directions, from the remains of an old common. He had collected every characteristic by which, in fiction, if not always in real life, the village green, time out of mind, has been distinguished. The pool "gabbled o'er by noisy geese;" the tree, encircled by the wooden seat; the well, with its wooden bucket; the broad expanse of turf, where "the playful children, just let loose from school," might scamper at will: all were here.

And here, on this afternoon, the May-pole stood, with a flowery throne for the May queen; while around, about—here, there, and everywhere—were scattered, in holiday attire, the country people. Among them, certain young men, about to compete in athletic sports, strutted, *minus* coat and waistcoat: or, the admiration of all beholders, practised leaps and races, in parties of two and three. The school-master, also master of the ceremonies, was bustling to and fro; shouting directions to a humble satellite, who

was engaged in the measurement of distances, and in the adjustment of various knotty points connected with the games. Hard by was a large white tent, a Union Jack flying from the top, and at the entrance a placard, advertising "Ginger-beer, Lemonade, and Refreshments." The minstrels of the morning sat within, and emitted strains more mirthful than harmonious; and, keeping time to these strains, the school-children, when Olivia and Gabrielle appeared, were marching in procession toward a row of tables laden with cake and cans of smoking tea.

"Now, Gabrielle, which will you do—wait on the children, or walk about?"

"I would rather go first to the children. What a pretty sight! It reminds me of the May-Day in 'Bracebridge Hall.'"

"Every one seems so happy—that is the best of it. Oh! there are the Edgecumbes! Make haste, Gabrielle. I must get Mr. Edgecumbe to say grace."

Long rows of boys and girls, clean and smiling—mugs in their hands, and expectation in their faces—were awaiting Olivia. Grace said, they established themselves on the grass, and the important business began. Gabrielle pulled off her gloves, looped up her dress, and went to work with right good-will. Which of the three were the greater child might well be doubted, as, a glow on her cheek, a sparkle in her eye, she helped two little Edgecumbes to carry about a huge basket of cake; they supporting one handle, and she, with considerable effort, the other.

While this process was enacting, James came up from behind, and paused, standing beside Olivia.

"It does one good to watch her," he said, presently. "How thoroughly she throws herself into the fun of the thing!"

"Who?" inquired Olivia.

"Who? Why, Gabrielle, of course.—Oh! how are you, Mrs. Edgecumbe? I beg your pardon, I did not see you. What a beautiful day!"

"It is indeed. The air is so mild—we ventured to bring all the children: even your godson, Mr. Gordon."

"Ah! exactly," said James, abstracted. His eyes had returned to Gabrielle. Mrs. Edgecumbe, a little piqued, fell back on Olivia, who proved a more sympathetic listener.

"Shall I help you, Gabrielle?"

She turned her head, and saw, close at her elbow, James.

"Oh! no, thank you—Mary and Fanny are helping me. This is such fun! What do you

think?—that child in the blue pinafore has devoured six pieces already, and is beginning a seventh."

"You don't maintain strict discipline. You should limit them."

"Oh! no, that would be a shame. Unless you have an eye to economy?"

"Don't think to wound me, Gabrielle, by your insinuations—they are beneath my notice. Look at that anxious cormorant—and that, and that."

"I must go to them.—Mary, those little boys want some cake."

And away once more she started; while James still followed her with his eye.

A carriage—an open barouche—rolled up in the rear. James was conscious of a flutter of muslins, light mantles, parasols; and heard a bland voice exclaim:

"Oh! Miss Gordon, here you are! How delightfully innocent!"

Turning, he saw that the carriage contained a party of their county neighbors; to wit, Mrs. Featherstone, an elderly lady; Miss Theodosia Featherstone, a young lady; Captain Featherstone, an officer with an eye-glass; and Miss Carew, Captain Featherstone's betrothed.

"You here too, Mr. Gordon? Dear me! I must get out and look about me.—And so will you, Jane, my dear, won't you? And The? Yes, The will, I know."

Then forth stepped Mrs. Featherstone, from her place in the crowded carriage, and landed herself upon the grass at Olivia's side. Mrs. Featherstone was short and stout, with a large aquiline nose; and a minute pair of eyes, which were constantly moving, or rather running, from thing to thing, from face to face. One glance told her whether its object were ugly or beautiful, "second-rate" or *comme il faut*, well or ill dressed; and—if that object was feminine—it also told her the price, within a shilling or two, of bonnet, brooch, and gown. Any thing deeper, any thing higher, fifty, nay, a hundred glances, would not have told her. Her mind dealt only in small matters; but in these it evinced such skill, that—among her female acquaintance, at least—Mrs. Featherstone was regarded with considerable awe. For the pricks administered by her eyes were as nothing to those shot forth by her tongue; which, perhaps, seemed all the more formidable for being accompanied by a bland voice, a polished manner, and a singularly suave smile.

Mrs. Featherstone, however, was not the

principal person who descended from the carriage. Somebody following her, attracted as much attention, as the company in general were, by this time, receiving from the minute eyes. Theodosia Featherstone—*alias*, The—*alias*, the Bijou—by which latter title she was distinguished in certain London clubs—was externally a Bijou indeed, very small and very beautiful. Perhaps, indeed, artistically viewed, she was almost faultless, in feature and in form: so bright, so soft, was her hair, so brilliant her complexion; her eyes were of so true a blue, her figure, her feet, her hands, were so perfectly proportioned.

Did the Bijou know that she was a Bijou? Undoubtedly she knew it; she further derived great satisfaction from this knowledge; but she was not particularly vain. It was the satisfaction of the picture-dealer, rather than of the artist. She had been born with a remarkable relish for the comforts and distinctions of this life. To obtain by "a good marriage" an ample share therein, was at the present moment her ambition; an ambition in which she of the minute eyes fully participated, feeling that, this blessed object attained, her work would be done. For The was her only daughter, and Captain Featherstone, her only son, had already secured unto himself two hundred thousand pounds: of which Miss Carew formed the complement.

"Who"—said Mrs. Featherstone—"who is that young lady in mourning, so busy among the children? A new face, I think."

"She is a cousin—a ward of my brother's," replied Olivia.

"Oh yes, by-the-by," cried The, addressing herself to James; "we heard the most charming report of her, the other day. Will you introduce me?"

"Certainly. She is absorbed in tea and cake, you see; but I'll fetch her."

"Oh! pray don't trouble yourself," exclaimed Miss Featherstone: who, if the truth were known, would greatly have preferred a *tête-à-tête* with James. But he was gone.

"Gabrielle, can you leave this basket to Mary and Fanny? Miss Featherstone—the belle of the West Riding—wishes to be introduced to you."

"To me?" cried Gabrielle, turning and seeing the new-comers; "wait one moment; where are my gloves? My hands are all over cake."

"Oh! that's a matter of course," said James, highly amused; "come along."

So she went; and was duly introduced to the whole party. Shortly after which she found herself standing with James and Miss Featherstone,

a little apart from the rest. The Bijou's loveliness was by no means lost upon Gabrielle. She gazed entranced, and drank it in—then looked at James; but his face was, as usual, impenetrable.

"We are off to London next week."

"Indeed?" said James.

"Of course you are going?"

"Not *en famille*, this year."

"Oh!"—with a glance at Gabrielle's mourning; "what will Marian and Cissy say to that?"

"Oh, they are all right. They are going with Peers and Annie. I shall probably run up and fetch them home, toward the end of the season."

"Then we *shall* see something of you! I thought you meant to turn into a recluse."

"Not just yet. The world must disgust me a little more first."

"That's reassuring. I have felt afraid to speak to you lately."

"Indeed! Has any alarming change taken place in my appearance?"

"No; but you are so clever, you know. And every one is raving about your book."

"Well, what of that?"

"It must make you despise a silly little thing like me!"

"Could any man look at you, and despise you?"

"Ah! you don't deny the fact. And you don't disguise it, either, by asking unmeaning questions."

"How do you know that that question was unmeaning? Can you read my heart?"

"No; and, what's more, I can't read your book. I tried so hard, but the first three lines were enough. It is too deep for me."

"What a pity I couldn't foresee that! I'd have made it shallower."

"If you would only write a novel, now—"

"With you for the heroine?"

"Don't be nonsensical. Will you write a novel, Mr. Gordon?"

"Some time, perhaps, since *you* ask me, when I have nothing better to do."

"Thank you—how polite! Seriously, though, I shall be proud of your acquaintance next week."

"Thank you—how polite! Seriously, though, are you ashamed of my acquaintance this week?"

"Not exactly; but you're acquainted with every one here; so there's no distinction in it. Next week I shall be in London, surrounded by people who never heard your name, until you became a lion; and when they rave about you, I shall say—'I know him!—I have heard him roar in private life!'"

"Ah! that will be true glory—won't it?"

"I sha'n't intensify your conceit by saying yes. Why does that bell ring?"

"It is a race-bell. By-the-by, should you like to see a race?"

"Immensely, I should. School-children are so insipid."

James lingered a moment, looking toward Gabrielle.

"Will you come too, Gabrielle?" said he.

Upon this Miss Featherstone also looked toward Gabrielle; and not merely toward her, but at her—in fact, she stared at her; and Gabrielle, conscious thereof, colored.

"I think," she said, feeling herself a little *de trop*, "I had better stay with the children."

"That's quite unnecessary," said James; "besides, you can come back whenever you like."

He stood as if determined not to move, until she moved likewise. Gabrielle thought it better to be *de trop* than to "make a fuss;" and the trio proceeded toward the more crowded portion of the green.

"Will there be prizes?" inquired Miss Featherstone.

"Yes, dispensed by the May queen."

"Is the May queen pretty, this year?"

"I thought so half an hour ago."

"And why not think so now?"

"She is now eclipsed."

"What will the lion-hunters say, when I tell them of the arrant nonsense which I have heard the lion talk?"

"They will say that your presence is more than sufficient to turn the wisest head.—Well, Tompkins, how are the races going on?"

"Foorst-rate, squire," replied the person thus addressed, with a tug at his battered beaver hat. "Yoong Rogers, t' keeper, has just bet i' t' two moile. They're boun' to joomp i' sacks, ee-now. Ma Dick's along wi' 'em."

"If I remember rightly, your Dick jumped uncommonly well last year."

"So 'e did, squire—so 'e did," replied Tompkins, highly delighted.

"You are such a painfully conscientious squire, you see," observed Miss Featherstone, laughing, as they moved on; "paying indiscriminate court all round, and bending to the level of Dicks and Tompkinses, just as you bend to mine. It makes you popular, of course; but is it worth the trouble?"

"Worth what trouble I expend, which is little enough. A pleasant word here and there is

easily said. Look! they are beginning the sack-race."

Ten or a dozen youths, tied up to their throats in sacks, were trying, with spasmodic jumps, to gain a post placed at some distance. This post was surmounted by a hat; which the successful aspirant was required to dislodge with his teeth. Every now and then, one or two of the competitors overbalanced himself, and fell with a heavy thump; rolling helplessly, until some friendly stander-by should volunteer to restore him to his feet. Once, in an intricate case, when two had fallen together, and were kicking and plunging, each against each, as best they could, through the sackcloth, that friendly stander-by, greatly to Miss Featherstone's diversion, was James; and in the peals of laughter which the whole scene called forth, no voice was more hearty than his own.

"I believe that, next year, you will jump yourself, Mr. Gordon. Pray congratulate Tompkins—his Dick has got the hat. Are you looking for your cousin? She has vanished. She found us bad company, I fear."

"Perhaps so," said James, gazing into the distance, in quest of Gabrielle's figure. He spied her out, at length. She was going in the direction of the school-children; leading a little boy by the hand. James suddenly recollected that, some minutes before, he had heard the voice of a little boy, calling "Mammy! mammy!" Gabrielle had heard it also, and was restoring him to his mammy: like a good angel, as she was.

"Do you like her?" inquired Miss Featherstone.

"That is rather a perplexing question. I may not be able, truthfully, to say yes; and yet I could hardly say no."

"Oh yes, you could—to me," said Miss Featherstone. "Besides, I never tell tales out of school, and I wish to know: what kind of girl is she?"

"You and I are two different people, you see. We might view her with different eyes. Far better judge for yourself."

"But I don't know her."

"You will know her, I dare say, sooner or later."

"How provoking you are, Mr. Gordon!"

Mr. Featherstone pretended to pout. But James took this with his ordinary *nonchalance*, making no attempt to excuse himself. They were shortly joined by the rest of the party; and the subject was dismissed.

If an hour later, Gabrielle, somewhat flushed and hurried, was taking a principal part in a

game dear to all Yorkshire children—"Dooek under t' watter-kit." Suddenly she heard a whisper of "Yon's t' squoire!" and saw James crossing the grass.

"You are tired, Gabrielle," he said, as he reached her; "you must play no longer."

"I choose to play," answered Gabrielle, willfully, not relishing the tone of command.

He instantly drew back, and Gabrielle went on playing; but he did not leave the spot.

Presently the game terminated. A little shyly, she stole to his side; and said, drawing on her gloves: "James, I have finished. Do you want me?"

"Not unless you want to come."

"But I do—I am quite ready to come," said Gabrielle.

"I beg your pardon for interfering just now. Of course I have no right to interfere with you. I forgot, at the moment, that you were not one of my younger sisters."

Something in his tone gave Gabrielle a slight pang. She did not like this cold disclaiming of all right. She glanced at him; saw that he was looking quite away from her, into the distance above her; and she bent her head somewhat nervously, over the fastening of her glove.

"Shall I button that?" said James.

"I have done it now, thank you. Are the Featherstones gone?"

"They are with Olivia. I left them to look for you. I thought that you might like to see the prizes given."

"Oh, thank you, James. I should, indeed. Shall we go at once?"

"There is no hurry. A bell will ring when the time comes. If you take my advice, you will rest a little, first."

"I shall be very glad to rest," said Gabrielle, anxious to atone; "now I think of it, I am rather tired."

"Suppose we sit down under that tree, and watch the children play? an employment after your own heart, I am sure."

Gabrielle smiled; and they went to the tree.

"But I shall hear the bell, alone," she said.

"Please go to the Featherstones."

"You want to get rid of me, then?"

"Oh, no; not unless you wish it. I only thought you might be staying from politeness, which I should hate."

It was James who smiled now.

"You are most refreshingly simple, Gabrielle," he said. "No, I really would rather stay, if you will have me. I want to talk to you a little. I

am tired of talking to Miss Featherstone. Coming from her to you, is like coming from a fountain, sparkling, indeed, but heated by playing in the sun, to a little clear brook which cannot hide so much as a pebble, and which is always cool, because the sunshine falls on it through over-arching boughs."

"James," said Gabrielle, blushing deeply; "you have forgotten your promise."

"What promise?"

"To pay me no more compliments. You know how I dislike them."

"I have not forgotten. But that promise was conditional."

Gabrielle blushed more deeply still.

"I promised that I would never pay you a compliment unless I meant it. I have kept that promise; and I am keeping it now."

Gabrielle made no reply; but she felt very happy. During several minutes they sat silent, the children playing round them, a bee humming in their ears—the sound of voices, softened by distance, wafted from the other end of the green.

"Gabrielle," said James, at length, "what do you think of Miss Featherstone?"

"I think she is very pretty—beautiful. The longer that I looked at her, the more I admired her."

"Yes, she is very pretty, certainly. But that is not the kind of thing I mean. How do you like her in herself? How does she strike you?"

"I have hardly seen enough of her to say. I shouldn't venture to infer any thing positive—good or bad—from the rattling conversation which she was keeping up with you."

"No, it is slightly idiotic in me to ask you such questions, yet. But when you know her better, I should really like to hear what you think. Such eyes as yours are often very clear-sighted."

"What does he mean? Oh, I hope he is not in love with her!" thought Gabrielle.

For Miss Featherstone—beautiful as she was—did not appear to her worthy of her Admirable Crichton.

"No—he cannot love her," she decided, a moment later, calling to mind his simile of the fountain; and her momentary misgivings were appeased.

Meanwhile James sat silent, deep in thought. All of a sudden he gave an impatient start; and his countenance changed, as though he had just dismissed some unpalatable subject from his mind.

"James," said Gabrielle, a little timidly, "I

have something to ask you—about your book, the book that Miss Featherstone mentioned. Olivia told me of it some time ago; and I begged her to let me read it. But she said that she had lent both her copies, and I must go to you for one."

"Well?"

"And—and I did not like to go to you," said Gabrielle, the ready color rising—"at least, I have been putting it off. But I should be so glad if you would lend the book to me."

"Perhaps you'll agree with Miss Featherstone about it?"

"I am not afraid," said Gabrielle, smiling.

He smiled too, and replied: "Well! you shall have it; but I should like you to read it with an unbiassed mind. Some day I'll put it on the table, among other new books, and leave you to take it up 'promiscuous,' ignorant of the author."

"Yes, do—that will be fun," said Gabrielle; and at this moment the bell rang.

CHAPTER XI.

"With hues of genius on his cheek,
In finest tones the youth could speak:

... a youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of heaven.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

OLIVIA and Gabrielle sat together in the drawing-room, Olivia working, Gabrielle reading aloud. The book was "Son and Heir," and Gabrielle was endeavoring to kindle in her cousin something of the enthusiastic admiration with which she herself regarded it. But somehow Olivia would not kindle, and in one of the most pathetic parts she annoyed Gabrielle to the last degree by observing, "Poor thing!"—at the same time threading her needle.

"Well! if all that you can say is, 'Poor thing!' I see no use in going on," thought Gabrielle; and, having reached the end of a chapter, she closed the book.

At the moment, Olivia made no remark; but shortly afterward—her needle threaded to her satisfaction, and her seam resumed—she exclaimed:

"By-the-hy, Gabrielle, I forgot to tell level Sarah Jane Tompkins has got the chicken-pox and to

The chicken-pox and Sarah Jane Tompkins is after Everard's broken heart! Gabrielle much incensed to reply. She sat silent, with her chin on her hand. Westward, there is

setting in all the glory which forms the "shepherd's delight;" and a row of Scotch firs, upon some distant eminence, stood out against that crimson background, in dark relief. The haze of twilight was stealing over the trees and fields; far away church-bells were ringing; from a bush hard by, resounded, now and then, the clear notes of a blackbird.

The pensive calmness accorded well with Gabrielle's frame of mind. She was full of the story which she had been reading: of the glow of joy which irradiates it for a time, of the premature declining of that joy, of the bitter end.

"I know it is only fiction," she said to herself; "it never actually happened. But things equally wretched do happen, every day. There are many Everards and many Sydneys in the real world who suffer as this Everard and this Sydney suffered, and whose lives, like theirs, are spoilt—through no sin, at any rate, of their own. Somehow, the world, and every thing in it, seems out of order—too much out of order to be ever disentangled."

For the first time, arose in Gabrielle's heart, the old familiar doubt:

"How can God, who is so merciful, allow so much of wrong-doing, of suffering? Why is He so silent? Why does He not interfere to set things right?"

She dwelt on this thought for a moment: then passed beyond.

"Is it necessary, after all, that they should be set right here? Is this world, in its present state, the final home of man? And will there not be plenty of time, in the world that is his final home, to remedy every thing—to arrange every thing? and plenty of room for the forsaken, and the wronged, and the neglected, who had no place on earth—or, having one, lost it?"

She set and pondered these things, and the glory died from the sky, and the light waned.

"Gabrielle, you seem in a very meditative mood!" observed Olivia.

"An idle one, too, I fear," said Gabrielle, rousing herself; "where is my work?"

"Never mind your work, dear. You are tired, no doubt. This weather is so weakening."

"The hottest spring that we have had—I don't know when," said James, entering suddenly. He had been at Rotherbridge all day on magistrate's business. Gabrielle inwardly thanked the twilight for hiding the color, which the unexpected sound of his voice sent in a flame to her cheek.

"James!" exclaimed Olivia, starting to her

feet, "let me ring for your dinner. Why, when did you come in? You are dressed!"

"Thank you, I have had my dinner," said James, laying his hand upon the bell-rope; "I have been at home half an hour."

"Dinner and dressing both, in half an hour?" cried Olivia, laughing. "What marvellous celerity!"

"Celerity is a virtue," said James, moving to the window where Gabrielle sat, and establishing himself, school-boy fashion, on the sill.—"Well, Gabrielle, what have you been doing? I suppose you hardly ventured on a ride?"

"No," said Gabrielle, with a smiling shake of the head; "but we drove—Olivia and I. Then there was my singing-lesson; and I sat out a long time reading."

"Well, as for me, I have been hard at work all day. I am by no means sorry to come home and rest. By-the-by, Olivia, I met Holt at Rotherbridge; his son is dying fast. I must go over and see him to-morrow."

"Poor fellow! Doubtless the heat has been too much for him," remarked Olivia: who was stitching ardently, despite the gathering darkness.

"Gabrielle," said James, exchanging the window-sill for an arm-chair, "I should like to ask you a favor."

"Should you? Do ask it, then."

"Yesterday I heard you singing to yourself in the gloaming. Will you sing now to me?"

"I am sure she will; and I'll ring for candles."

James cried out in horror:

"My dear Olivia! Candles? The bare mention of candles dispels the charm.—Gabrielle, doesn't it?"

Gabrielle smiled. She sat down at the piano, and sang song after song; and the last faint gleams of daylight faded, and the stars began, one by one, to twinkle into being. While James, lying back in his chair, forgot his hard day's work; forgot all that had annoyed him, all that in any way perplexed or disturbed his mind. A sense of entire repose, of peace unbroken, entranced him, heart and soul. Whether or no he were dreaming, he could not tell; but somehow, there seemed at that moment to be only two people in the world: himself and Gabrielle. Presently—without doubt he was dreaming now—he thought that Gabrielle began to rise, to float serenely into a purer atmosphere, and that, as he looked earnestly after her, he found himself by her side. The air was full of soft music; from

far below, the sounds of earth came in a mighty murmur, etherealized, subdued; and, thus on and on, they rose—he and she—impelled by some mysterious voice, which cried “Higher”—ever “Higher.”

It was a pleasant vision, but strangely unlike those that usually visited James. He felt half ashamed of it, when, candles and tea appearing, he opened his eyes in the ordinary world.

“I believe you have been asleep, James,” said Gabrielle, with a merry laugh; “I spoke to you five minutes ago, and so did Olivia, but no answer came.”

“I beg ten thousand pardons, I’m sure,” said James; “and many thanks for your singing.—No, upon my honor”—as Gabrielle laughed again—“I heard the greater part. It was only just at the last that I dozed off.” He rose and went to the window, where he stood, absently sipping his tea, and looking out. “I think I shall have a turn on the terrace. Olivia, or Gabrielle, or both, will you come too?”

Olivia replied in the negative, being anxious to finish her work; but Gabrielle declared that—the evening was so close—she should enjoy a turn above all things; she would fetch her hat. Olivia was insisting that she must also fetch a cloak; and James, to spare her the trouble, was offering a straw hat and a plaid of his own, which hung in the hall, when Wilcox entered to announce that Mr. Reynolds, the steward, begged the favor of a few words with his master.

“Mr. Reynolds!” repeated James, in a tone not altogether flattering. “That Reynolds always turns up when he is least wanted,” he added, as Wilcox withdrew; “he has no tact—ten to one, he’ll keep me an hour. Well, I suppose you must excuse me, Gabrielle. I’ll come back as soon as I can.”

He went; and Gabrielle, to beguile the waiting, took up a book.

A new book, partly upcut; “Four Essays” by name. To one of these essays Gabrielle turned, and began to skim it over. But soon, instead of skimming, she found herself reading, her interest thoroughly aroused. The first few lines sufficed to stamp it as of more than ordinary merit. Advancing further, she was surprised to see how rich in powerful diction, in striking ideas, in original thought, was almost every page. Take it altogether, she thought, this must be a wonderful book—the work of a wonderfully-gifted mind.

Only, underlying all the beauty, all the talent, ran a want. She did not pause to analyze this

want; but she knew that it was there. Every now and then, it seemed to chill her—to create within her a certain vague sense of dreariness, of desolation. And yet when, James reappearing, she closed the volume, she felt as though she had fallen from some superior atmosphere, some grander world. Half in a dream, she followed her cousin to the hall; donned the straw hat, and suffered him to wind the plaid round her shoulders. Then, still in a dream, passed out, he with her, upon the terrace; a long, old-fashioned walk, bordered by a moss-grown balustrade.

The air was fragrant with lilacs; the sky was cloudless, spangled with innumerable stars. James and Gabrielle had slowly paced the whole length of the terrace, and had turned to retrace their steps, before either spoke.

“You seem preoccupied this evening, Gabrielle?”

“Oh!” said Gabrielle, effervescing in a sigh a portion of her superabundant enthusiasm; “oh! I have found such a beautiful book—a book of real genius! ‘Four Essays,’ who wrote it, James? I never saw it, or heard of it, till just now. There was only one drawback—by-the-by—” she exclaimed, stopping short in her walk, while a sudden light broke out over her face—“by-the-by, you promised to put it on the table! James, do speak—do tell me. It is, isn’t it—?”

“What?” said James, smiling at her eagerness.

“Your book—the book that ‘every one is raving about.’ Oh, it must be! James, do answer.”

“Well, Gabrielle, I confess; ‘Four Essays’ is my book. I put it on the drawing-room table, this morning, before I went to Rotherbridge. And now let me hear your opinion.”

“How can you stoop to ask my opinion, after writing such a book?” said Gabrielle, with a reverential glance.

He smiled again; but his smile was somewhat melancholy.

“Ah, Gabrielle—I hoped to have done something greater than that, by the time that I was five-and-twenty! When people say so much of it, I think—alas, for one standard! My mind was full, and I felt constrained to write—something—somehow. These essays—essays in the most limited sense—were the result. And now I am really in earnest; tell me your impressions. You spoke of a drawback. What is it?”

“Well,” said Gabrielle, whose dread of affection always served as a balance to her natural timidity—“well, if you won’t think me pre-

sumptuous, I'll confess that now and then, even while the beauty and the genius were stirring my heart, came passages which made me feel as though cold water had suddenly been thrown upon me, and had put out—oh! ever so much of light and warmth! Perhaps the philosophy is too high for me—too far above my head. But at the time I could not help fancying that there was too much contempt in the spirit of the book, too little geniality, and sympathy. One may be genial, and sympathetic too, without being either weak or sentimental. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly I think so. But I believe that the chill which you describe was caused by your considering the subject from a feminine point of view; in other words, in the light of the affections. I conceived those essays, not with my heart, but with my mind. In my opinion the heart is inferior to the mind; and to prefer the desires of the heart before the aims of the mind is a mistake, a highly injurious mistake. I may have gone a little too far, have disparaged unnecessarily the minor things of life; but this I look upon as a fault on the right side."

"Do you?" said Gabrielle, half sorrowful, half wondering. "Do you really consider that the intellect is so superior to the affections?"

"Undoubtedly," returned James, in an emphatic tone. "Animals can love. Dogs are among the most affectionate creatures in existence; and bears dote upon their cubs. But they are incapable of reason—they can appreciate nothing that does not appeal to the senses; and, in my judgment, so far as a man allows his lower nature—his passions—his affections—to acquire an influence over his higher nature, so far that man descends in the scale of creation—descends toward the level of a beast. This species of argument is employed in a somewhat different sense by moralists. A beast is governed by appetite: *ergo*, they say, if man be governed by appetite, he becomes a beast. So he does. But I extend the idea. Not sin alone, but weakness, the immoderate indulgence of the affections, and so forth—all these things lower a man."

"Do you mean that it lowers a man to love his wife and his children?"

"Not if we love them in a reasonable way. What I mean is, that the intellect and its pursuits should come first, and the affections last, in thought, in interest, in the division of time. For example, a man should not so love his wife and his children, as that his mind is full of them, that his will yields preëminence to theirs, that, when they die, he is unable to resign them with equanimity,

or, at least, with calmness. A man who cannot command his emotions, is not a free man, but a slave."

"James, this is cold, stoical doctrine. I could never admire it, never—argue as you might. And what is the use, after all, of such rigid discipline?"

"The use? Picture to yourself a temple, rising gradually, stone by stone. Until it stands complete, perfect in majesty—each little carving, each stately pillar, finished alike without a flaw. Such is man, Gabrielle—or rather, such he might be, if he would: if he would but begin early, as his chief concern, in the work of building himself up. Moulded in the image of the Divine! Is it divine, Gabrielle, to be swayed by the gust of passion? to be dependent on a fellow-creature? to bow beneath the mere external influences of pain, of sorrow, of death?"

Gabrielle paused.

"I believe," she said at last, "that you are right in your object, but mistaken in your means."

"How?"

"I can't explain as you do, James. But I think I can give you some idea of what I wish to say. Once, in a beautiful little book, called 'Earth's Many Voices,' I read a story about an Alpine girl, who had a fancy to gather the whitest, which was also the highest, flower upon a certain mountain. And, this being her ambition, she would have passed the lower flowers by, as of no use—a hinderance rather. But a gentian spoke, and told her not to despise those lower flowers, for that each was good in its way. So, as she climbed, she stooped and gathered every little blossom that she happened to see, each a few steps above the last. Thus she passed from beauty to beauty, and from height to height, until she reached the highest, the most beautiful of all."

"But life is too short," said James, impatiently. "While we stop to pluck the lower flowers, daylight declines, night falls, and we are only half-way up the hill."

"But will not daylight come again?" said Gabrielle. "And then, shall we not go on rising forever and forever?"

James made no reply. He believed himself to be a good churchman and a tolerable theologian. Nevertheless, this idea was new to him. It may seem strange—but he had never realized, as a fact, the "Life Everlasting."

"With regard to what you say about the intellect and the heart," added Gabrielle, "I am

not able to answer you; and, in a measure, no doubt you are right. But I can't help thinking of that verse in the Bible—'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.' Edifieth, in its primary sense, means 'buildeth up,' doesn't it?"

James was still silent; she began to fear that her presumption had disgusted him. She thought of the power, the eloquence of the "Four Essays," and wondered how she had dared to speak so boldly.

The bell rang for prayers.

"We must go in," said James; and in they went.

On the topmost step, Gabrielle paused to ask—

"James, have I offended you?"

"Offended me!" he replied, laughing. "My dear child! It is a natural sequence that, being feminine, you should see things in a feminine light."

Gabrielle secretly swelled; but she said nothing more: and they entered the drawing-room.

A day or two later, as she and Olivia were returning from a walk, they fell in with four equestrians; who proved, on inspection, to be the Bijou, the Bijou's brother, Miss Carew, and a gentlemen unknown. They had taken Miss Gordon at her word, announced The, and had come to luncheon. Was it convenient? because, if not, they would wheel round and retire. Olivia was properly horrified at this suggestion, and the whole party proceeded to the house.

But first, Miss Featherstone had begged to introduce Lord Joseph Postlethwaite, the gentleman unknown. He was about eight-and-twenty years of age, exceedingly long and lanky; he had high shoulders, red hair, and a red face; he had, further, a retreating chin, and no forehead in particular. At luncheon he sat beside Gabrielle, and they conversed as follows:

Lord Joseph.—"Awfully dull neighborhood, is it not?"

Gabrielle.—"My cousins don't find it so. There is generally something, of one kind or another, going on, I believe—except, perhaps, in the spring."

Lord Joseph.—"Ah!—exactly—yes—in the spring. They are all at town in the spring, of course—the Featherstones, and everybody. The Featherstones go to-morrow. Exactly."

A long interval, during which Lord Joseph devoured cold chicken and drank sherry, with intense enjoyment; and stared, over the rim of his wine-glass, at Miss Featherstone.

Lord Joseph.—"What confounded hot weather we have had lately!"

Gabrielle.—"It has never been too hot for me. I think heat is delightful in the country."

Lord Joseph.—"You really think so? 'Pon my word, Miss Featherstone said precisely the same at breakfast! Singular. But I assure you it was so. Exactly."

A second long interval, occupied as above.

Lord Joseph.—"A fine place, this. Famous preserves!"

Gabrielle assented.

Lord Joseph.—"Captain Featherstone is a first-rate shot. I do very little in that way myself. He fond of shooting?" jerking his head in James's direction.

Gabrielle.—"I believe he is very fond of it."

Lord Joseph.—"Ah! undoubtedly. So I should imagine. Exactly. Yes."

After which, for the remainder of luncheon, his lips were sealed.

Miss Featherstone, meanwhile, was undergoing some slight perturbation of mind. James was certainly more alive to Gabrielle's presence than he should have been, she by. In revenge, she betook herself, when luncheon was over, to flirtation with Lord Joseph, glancing, from time to time, under cover of her eyelashes, at the offender, to see what he thought. He thought that she was in earnest, considerably left the happy couple to themselves, and beguiled the intervals of a long "eight game" of croquet by chit-chat with Captain Featherstone and Miss Carew. Had it been chit-chat with Gabrielle, The would have called it pique, and taken comfort. As it was, she quitted Farnley in no agreeable humor.

"That nasty little cousin," she observed to Miss Carew, "will be cooped up with Mr. Gordon all the summer. A golden chance, as she's fully aware. But it will cost her some pains."

"Certainly," soliloquized James, the same evening, as he smoked his cigar on the terrace—"certainly she has no dislike to that ass, nor he to her; and— Well! at any rate, it is a pleasant thought that the world is off to London, and that I am free to follow my own devices, and spend as much time as I like over that dear child Gabrielle. I could never have believed, if I had not seen, that such a sweet little thing existed among women! So unaffected, through and through, she is; and so eager, so full of interest in all she undertakes."

He mused for a long time upon this increasingly fruitful theme. He might so have mused until midnight, had he not been interrupted. A passing bell rang with startling clearness through the calm evening air. Another human tale—

short, fitful, broken—was told. Young Anthony Holt was dead.

CHAPTER XII.

"You first called my woman's feelings forth,
And taught me love ere I had dreamed love's name.

At last
I learned my heart's deep secret."
LETITIA ELIZABETH LONDON.

SUMMER drew on apace. The lengthening days rolled by, quickly as happily. Gabrielle became a good horsewoman; her singing prospered—likewise her organ-lessons. She read, too—chiefly books selected by James; books which made her think, which cultivated her reason, interspersed with others of a lighter kind—good wholesome novels, poems, travels, and so forth. Her morbid desire to die had altogether vanished. Only one thing troubled her—a sense of insecurity, of living in a dream that must sooner or later "fade into the light of common day."

One morning, at the beginning of June, a black-edged note, with a delicate scent and an elaborate monogram, arrived from Lady Louisa Pembroke. It invited Gabrielle to spend three nights in the ensuing week at Lorton; in order—so the note ran—that dear Charlie's relatives might become properly acquainted with her before the long vacation.

This circumstance afforded great satisfaction to Olivia, who repeatedly congratulated Gabrielle on the evident friendliness of "dear Charlie's relatives." The invitation was therefore accepted—the three nights being commuted to two. For it so happened that on the third night, James, by request of the Rotherbridge Early Closing Association, was to deliver, in the Rotherbridge Town-hall, a lecture, which Gabrielle would have been sorely grieved to miss.

The day appointed for her departure came; she started in solitary glory. After half an hour's drive along the high-road, the carriage entered upon a shady lane, and shortly turned in at a white gate of antiquated appearance—the gate of Lorton Court. The Court itself was a venerable building, gable-ended, with mullioned windows, and doors of massive oak. Gabrielle presently found herself being ushered by a white-haired butler, across a wainscoted hall, into a drawing-room with satin hangings, brocaded chairs, and stools of tambour-work.

The butler, as he was about to retire, coughed

—a cough aged and prolonged; which seemed to attract the attention of some person in an adjoining apartment. The flutter of a fan was heard; and a plaintive voice said:

"Groves!"

"Yes, my lady," said the butler, disappearing, in a great hurry, behind a half-open door.

"Groves," in an audible undertone, "has Miss Wynn arrived?"

"Yes, my lady. Miss Wynn is in the drawing-room, my lady."

"And where is Miss Euphrosyne? Pray tell Miss Euphrosyne, Groves; pray remind her. Say that I am sure she does not wish to be impolite; but that our guest is entirely alone. Entirely alone, Groves," said the voice, increasing in plaintiveness.

"Yes, my lady," responded Groves.

As he reëntered the drawing-room, Euphrosyne—after the precipitate manner not uncommon to young ladies of "the awkward age"—burst in at the opposite door. She bore down like a whirlwind upon Gabrielle, leaving the door to slam, and overturning one of the tambour-work stools. Angularity was at this time the distinguishing characteristic of Euphrosyne's appearance; but she had a pleasant face, and a bright smile—she had, further, Charlie Godfrey's blue eyes, a fact of itself sufficient to prepossess Gabrielle in her favor.

"Mamma is not quite well to-day—she wished me to ask you to be so very good as to excuse her till after luncheon. There will be Miss Reinheldt, and me, and Ianthe, and the children too, you know, if you can put up with us," said Euphrosyne.

Gabrielle made some polite reply, and felt secretly none the less pleased. She was now conducted, up a slippery flight of oak stairs, and along a slippery passage, to her room: Euphrosyne chatting all the way.

"Is it not a ghostified house? But you need not be frightened, for your room opens into ours—Ianthe's and mine; and at night we can leave the door open. The passage is haunted. The servants tell us wonderful stories about it; and Ianthe generally believes them, till she has talked them over with Miss Reinheldt. Miss Reinheldt reasons away all such foolishness in no time, she is so clever. Mamma delights in this house."

"Does she?"

"Oh! yes; because it is so antiquated, you know, and so romantic—so like a house in a novel. She engaged Groves, our butler, to suit the

surroundings. He is so old that he can hardly get through his work; and Miss Reinheldt says that he ought to be in an almshouse. But mamma means to keep him; she likes to look at him and fancy that he is an ancient retainer of the family."

"I thought that he must be one."

"So everybody thinks. But he isn't. We have only had him two months; and he came to us from a Mr. Perkes, a wholesale tallow-dealer. There's the luncheon-bell. Are you ready?"

They descended to the dining-room, where they found Ianthe, a gentle edition of Euphrosyne; with several younger children, equally gifted in the matter of names; and Miss Reinheldt, the governess. For the latter lady, a middle-aged German, who took the head of the table, Euphrosyne evidently entertained a profound respect. She deferentially drank in every sentence that Miss Reinheldt uttered; then glanced at Gabrielle, with eyes which inquired—"Was there ever such a person before?" And without doubt, Miss Reinheldt was clever, sensible, in every way superior. But Gabrielle could not be expected to learn all this by intuition, or in half an hour of the intercourse of a luncheon-table. How then was it that, on being questioned, immediately afterward, her estimation of Miss Reinheldt's worth satisfied even Euphrosyne?

"Miss Wynn, I am indebted to your cousin, Mr. Gordon, for much pleasure—and, I may add, much instruction. Of course you have read his 'Four Essays?'"

"Oh! yes," said Gabrielle, her eye kindling, her cheek flushing.

"I have seldom met with an English book more thoroughly to my taste. It is so rich in suggestive ideas. And then—the language is so fine!"

"Yes—beautiful!" said Gabrielle. Euphrosyne scrutinized her, curiously.

"Gabrielle, you must be very proud of your cousin! Every one is talking about him."

"I do feel rather proud of him sometimes," Gabrielle answered.

She might have answered—"Very proud of him always!"

"Mamma met a gentleman in Oxford—very clever—an author, and all that, you know. He began talking of the 'Four Essays,' and he said that the London critics had a high opinion of Mr. Gordon. They expect him to be something grand some day."

"How painfully incoherent you are, my dear Euphrosyne! Pray be more careful in express-

ing yourself," cried Miss Reinheldt, smiling; and Euphrosyne was silenced. But she had said enough to keep Gabrielle in a state of abstraction during the remainder of the meal.

Shortly after luncheon the aged Groves announced that her ladyship would be glad to see Miss Wynn, if Miss Wynn would not mind the trouble of stepping to her ladyship's boudoir.

To her ladyship's boudoir, therefore, Gabrielle repaired. The flaxen-haired widow was reclining upon a sofa, the atmosphere redolent of rose-leaves. Beside her stood a small table, bearing a scent-bottle, a fan, a roll of worsted-work, and a book—conspicuously open—entitled "Lays for the Afflicted."

"Ah, Miss Wynn! I am glad to see you," said the plaintive voice. Three fingers, very fat and very white, were tendered to Gabrielle's clasp. "Come here, my dear—near me; yes, that chair. My feelings are so often too much for me! They were too much for me this morning—quite wore me out—or I should have been with you at luncheon. But my Euphrosyne took care of you—and Miss Reinheldt? I hope you were happy?"

"Thank you, quite. They are very kind."

"I'm so glad—so glad to hear it! I never desire to be missed. I never expect it, and therefore it is no surprise to me that I never am. Out of sight, out of mind, you know, dear. But I have not sent for you to talk of myself. There is a more interesting topic to be broached. Perhaps you can guess it?"

She paused, and the large, light eyes, fraught with sentimental meaning, fixed themselves on Gabrielle's face. But Gabrielle only opened her own eyes a little wider than usual, and declared herself unable to guess any thing.

"Ah, my dear! you need not hesitate. You can open your heart to me. I have been young. I have loved. I shall not ridicule; neither shall I betray. Come, tell me all about it."

"I don't know what you mean," said Gabrielle, half amused, half perplexed.

"Ah! I so thoroughly understand a reserved nature. My nature is reserved. The finest natures frequently are reserved. The grief that cannot speak, whispers the o'er-charged heart, and bids it break. My heart was nearly broken once, and I found relief by unburdening it to a friend. You shall find the same, my dear. I will be that friend to you."

"But my heart is not inclined to break. At least," said Gabrielle, laughing, "I feel no symptoms of it, yet."

"Love is a strange thing," said Lady Louisa, laying the three fat fingers across her eyes, so that, the flaxen ringlets also considered, her face was wellnigh buried; "love is a strange thing. Deceptive, too—wondrously deceptive. I have meditated much and deeply upon this interesting subject, and not one of all its peculiar features strikes me more forcibly than its exceeding reticence, its tendency to shrink from observation."

"I don't feel that," said Gabrielle; "when I love people, I like them to know it."

"Miss Wynn," said Lady Louisa, in an injured tone, "you are either very simple or very artful. You must see, surely, to what kind of love I refer."

"Oh!" exclaimed Gabrielle, slowly, as a new light broke in upon her. "But then I don't understand that kind of love, as yet."

This astounding confession brought Lady Louisa's eyes from their shade. In a solemn and prophetic voice, she answered:

"You do not understand, Miss Wynn—or Gabrielle—I suppose I may call you so?—you do not understand that kind of love? Say, rather, that you do not understand its symptoms. I will put your ignorance, or your innocence, to the test. Is there no one—do you know no one, with whom you feel satisfied, in your element? more satisfied, more in your element, than you feel with any one else? No one whose step causes your heart to bound, whose touch thrills through you, over whose simplest words you ponder, as though they had been the most glorious speeches imaginable? No one in whose absence you are conscious of a blank, a craving, an *ennui*, whose opinion outweighs to you that of the whole world besides; who is continually in your dreams; who comes involuntarily to your thoughts, if your imagination or your emotions be stirred by poetry or by music? No one to whom you look, as to a model of human perfection—whom you reverence almost as you might reverence an angel? No one?"

She ceased, for her shaft had sped home. By degrees the innocent wonder had faded from Gabrielle's eyes; the childlike serenity of the mouth had given place to a graver expression. Finally, over the fair young face came a glow of color. It rose to the forehead; it descended to the throat. Her companion's curiosity was appeased.

"Lady Louisa," said Gabrielle, after a pause. —Had she been conscious of her own confusion, she would not have spoken; but she was totally unconscious of it—as of the impression that she

was producing. Her mind was otherwise absorbed.—"Lady Louisa, if I could answer yes to those questions—if I did know any one who was all that to me—would it prove—"

Her voice trembled. Lady Louisa helped her out.

"It would prove that you were in love, my dear; and, in fact, you are so, as I have seen from the first. Should I address such questions to my fancy-free Euphrosyne, or to my innocent Ianthé? Certainly not. Nothing is more harmful than to awaken a young maiden soul before its time. But you are different. Ah, yes! how it revives my early days! He showed me some of your letters, poor dear boy, at Oxford. He was so glad to open his heart to me," etc., etc.

Thus continued Lady Louisa's plaintive murmur, "like water for ever a-dropping"—or "a-flowing," rather. But all was lost upon Gabrielle. She sat as if in a dream. For the moment, one overwhelming idea excluded every other from her mind.

"If that be true—if that is love—I love James!"

"Naturally, yes; you must feel it:" were the words which met Gabrielle's ears, when, after some minutes of entire abstraction, she returned to the outer world; "you must feel it—both you and he, poor fellow!" ("Feel what? And who is the poor fellow?" thought Gabrielle.) "Poor darling Mr. Pembroke was absent three months at the beginning of our engagement. So, my love, you may safely confide in me. Some cannot sympathize; but I can. The long vacation will soon begin; and you shall meet him here. Come posing that I asked Miss Gordon to sparr, a little six weeks—what would she say? Cery—that, could at any time ride or walk to Far that would not be the same thing, stooping cases the evenings are so precious Godfrey. love?" again and meet

"Lady Louisa, you are mist Gabrielle, blushing deeply; "indeed, I suppose, just is nothing—" ation."

"On that point," interrupted "his behavior has been most houn Godfrey, would not fetter you—he wished you of the world ere he spoke. But, oks are quite brielle! what are words? The heart h language. Perhaps you are occasionaln't he?" by misgivings? Love was never yet w pang, the agony, the doubt. However, e?" not fear. I say so. See the comfort of ordained in a friend like me! I read in his manner,

in his eye, that he was your true, devoted knight, your *preux chevalier*. So doubt no more."

Lady Louisa paused to take breath; and Gabrielle, who had been vainly endeavoring to speak—each endeavor checked by a slight elevation of the plaintive tones, a flourish of the fan—Gabrielle at length broke in, with considerable impetuosity:

"Lady Louisa, indeed—you are entirely mistaken. Charlie and I are friends—brother and sister—nothing more."

"Well! we'll let it drop for the present," said Lady Louisa, smiling softly; "I cannot expect full confidence all at once. But if ever you should need help, help and tender counsel, then"—the three fingers pressed Gabrielle's wrist, while the flaxen ringlets trembled—"then, my child, remember me: the broken-hearted, and therefore the pitying, Louisa!"

Gabrielle afterward feared that at this juncture she had shown herself sadly impolite, for she said not so much as "Thank you," disengaged her wrist, and, rising, began to admire the view from the nearest window. Lady Louisa's attention, however, was happily diverted by the sudden appearance of Euphrosyne.

"My sweet Euphrosyne!" said she, in an injured tone; "you are—when you recollect—consideration itself; and if you had borne in mind my very particular dislike to unexpected noises, no doubt you would have entered more quietly. As it is, I feel quite startled and overcome. Pick up my fan, dear child; and ring for Bellhouse—I must have some sal-volatile. Euphrosyne, did you hear? You love to be of use. Here is an opportunity. Pick up my fan."

more than Euphrosyne, with composure, obeyed; and suggested a short pause, turned to Gabrielle. Miss fine!" had proposed an afternoon in the hay-

"Yes—and Gabrielle come too? She glanced upon her scrutinized."

"Gabrielle, dear, by all means," said the plain-cousin! Every day I am never so happy as when left alone. I do feel lonesome. Solitude is the widow's Gabrielle answered enjoy yourself."

She might go, nothing loath. She sat beneath the tree, and Euphrosyne and Ianthe under a tree; and

"Mamma sat close by, and read the 'Daisy'—a clever—said. Gabrielle listened, watched the needle-work, began to talk, worked at a little needle-case—that the I was making, by Olivia's request, for Mr. Gordon Tomkins. In her ears resounded the grand son's words: "Is there no one, do you

"No one, in whose presence you feel satisfied, Euphrosyne in your element?"—blending with Miss

Reinheldt's German accent, Cocksmoor, Ethel, Norman: while, from the other end of the field, softened by distance, came the voices of the hay-makers. So the day wore on.

Lady Louisa appeared at dinner. Euphrosyne and Ianthe, with the sister next to them in age, were also present.

"I love to be surrounded by my children," said Lady Louisa glancing through her flaxen ringlets, at Gabrielle. "These dear girls always dine with me, when we are alone. Should you ever be a widow—which Heaven forbid!—you will understand it."

At length, to Gabrielle's joy, came bedtime. Now, in the solitude and silence, she could disentangle her ideas. This new, this sudden consciousness—what was it? Something very wrong, very unmaidenly? Asking herself this question, Gabrielle blushed—a hot, deep blush, spreading, despite the darkness, all over her face and neck.

For, unsophisticated though she was in all such matters—as unsophisticated as could well be possible for any girl in her twentieth year—she yet knew that to be won unsought is considered a degradation. The very height of degradation did it appear, just now. "Can that have been the case with me?" she thought: but only for a moment. Then rushed, in a flood, upon her memory, a thousand looks, words, gestures: which, as coming from James, had made her happy—with a happiness that she had never analyzed. She remembered her first awe of him—how disposed she had been to regard him as a demi-god, from afar. He himself had dissipated her fears. His own hand had drawn her to a closer place. He had sought her: not she him.

And yet it could hardly be called seeking, in the common acceptance of the term. She recollected the scorn with which he spoke and wrote of all matters connected with the heart. "Perhaps—" thought the simple child—"he hopes that I shall never marry, and that he and I and Olivia shall live together, nicely and comfortably, all our lives, as we are living now. But I'll try—yes, I'll try my best—to put these ideas away—to forget them quite. I wish I had never seen Lady Louisa!"

Then she hid her face in the pillow, and cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

"He, the grandest of them all,
Yet so gentle and so kind!
Smiling lip and sparkling eye,
Strong in courage, clear in mind.

As in yonder azure deep,
Shines that bright and glorious star,
So in my clear heaven he shines,
Bright and glorious, lofty, far!

Onward, onward hold thy course,
Let me but thy radiance see;
On thee let me humbly gaze,
Sad, yet happy, let me be!"

Adalbert von Chamisso,

TRANSLATED BY R. I. M.

THE day of James's lecture had arrived, and Olivia had promised that at three o'clock the carriage should call to take Gabrielle home. But three, half-past three, four, had struck, and no carriage was forthcoming. Gabrielle had been ready some time, and had strolled, with Lady Louisa, her daughters, and Miss Reinheldt, into the garden. Lady Louisa was revolving the possibility of drawing Gabrielle away, down some side-walk, and getting rid of the others. This Gabrielle perceived; and her anxiety, in listening for the wheels, increased.

"Hark!" said Euphrosyne, suddenly.

A moment later, to Gabrielle's deep relief, the pony-carriage appeared in the avenue.

"Who is that gentleman, my dear?" said Lady Louisa.

"My cousin James," replied Gabrielle, her cheeks crimson.

"Indeed! You must introduce me. I hear that he is quite a lion."

So they walked all together toward the house, reaching the door just as James, with his black ponies, was making the grand final sweep.

All Gabrielle's old shyness of this formidable cousin seemed now to revive. She felt it no light task to advance in front of the rest, and, after a timid "How do you do?" to make known Lady Louisa Pembroke to Mr. Gordon; then, beneath his eye, to bid her adieux, and take her place in the carriage.

"Pray, Mr. Gordon," said Lady Louisa, "thank your sister for sparing Gabrielle; and tell her that, some time in the vacation, I shall ask the same favor again."

James bowed—a little stiffly, Gabrielle thought. Lady Louisa waved her fan, Euphrosyne smiled and nodded, and the ponies cantered away.

"Did you think that we had forgotten you?"

"I thought that you were rather late in sending for me."

"It was Olivia's fault. What should she take it into her head to do, but invite Mr. Edgecumbe, his wife, and a lady visitor, to go to Rotherbridge in our carriage! That, of course, with Olivia herself, fills it, and you and I are turned out. I put off coming till now, because I want to do the whole thing at a stretch—drive straight from Lorton to Rotherbridge, without stopping at Farnley."

"I thought that the lecture did not begin till half-past seven."

"No more it does; but Olivia, you, and I, are to dine at the rectory, and go to the Town-hall with the Turners' party.—By-the-by, I've a piece of news for you. My sister Marian is engaged to be married."

"Oh! indeed? I am so glad—" began Gabrielle.

James smacked his whip impatiently.

"Is not that a woman all over?" said he, with a sarcastic smile. "Only mention the word engaged, and she is glad: *couleur de rose* taken for granted. However, in this case, I believe your gladness has some foundation. It is not a foolish boy-and-girl affair, I am thankful to say. Marian is twenty-three—a very fair age to begin matrimony; and Cavendish is thirty-nine, a capital fellow, and an admiral to boot. How have you enjoyed yourself, Gabrielle?"

"Oh, tolerably—they are very kind; only one can't get used to people all at once. I shall like it better next time, especially if—"

"If what?" said James; for she had come to a sudden pause. He looked at her, a little surprised, and saw that she was blushing—that, as he looked, the blush deepened.

"If Charlie be there," she went on, stooping to pick up her parasol—"Charlie Godfrey. Lady Louisa has asked me to go again and meet him."

"That was what she meant, I suppose, just now, when she mentioned the vacation."

"Yes, I suppose it was."

"What sort of fellow is that young Godfrey, Gabrielle? Clever?"

"Not exactly clever. His abilities are quite good enough for common use."

"He writes to you pretty often, doesn't he?"

"Every fortnight."

"When will he come to Meddiscombe?"

"Early next year. He hopes to be ordained at Christmas."

"You will be glad to have him so near?"

"Of course I shall. I am very fond of him," said Gabrielle, half perplexed. It was not like James to ask these trifling questions. And he looked grave—a little stern, even: a cloud had come over his face. Perhaps he thought that she was not sufficiently reserved in her intercourse with Charlie Godfrey.

"You know, James, Charlie and I were only children, and, living in the same village, we were constantly together. It would have been very strange if, in all those years, we had not grown to care for one another."

"Very strange indeed; there is no necessity to justify it," said James.

He spoke coldly; and Gabrielle, although silenced, was by no means reassured. She leaned back in the carriage, and wished that she had not mentioned Charlie's name. A moment ago she had inwardly reproached Lady Louisa for making her conscious; but, perhaps, after all, it was well that, at her age, she should be conscious. Perhaps she had been, in her innocence, too open; more so than befitted a young girl. She would take special care for the future—any thing sooner than that James should think her bold and unmaidenly. Then her mind went back to the time when ideas such as these were unknown to it; when she was with her father—never in any danger of being misunderstood by him. For the instant, the agony of her bereavement revived in full force. She shrank from the untried state on the border of which she stood. Heights and depths hitherto unimagined, lay before her; she knew no way of escape.

"I would rather die than go through all that I may have to go through," she thought, with an involuntary shudder. And a voiceless prayer sped up to Heaven, that she might die indeed.

But the prayer passed unanswered; such prayers usually do so pass. Life and death are not ours, to choose or to spurn, as we, in our blindness, would have them. God, the All-Wise, has appointed to us lessons which life alone, it seems, can teach. We are at school, and we must stay out our time.

Half unconsciously, a little tear stole from Gabrielle's eye, and trickled down her cheek. James saw it, with a pang of compunction—not that he guessed its cause; but he was aware of having spoken under the influence of strong irritation, and he feared that some involuntary roughness of tone or manner had wounded her—she was so very sensitive! He roused himself, and set to work to restore her spirits. And ere

long, soothed by his sudden change of the extreme gentleness, almost tenderness, James could, if he would, assume, and assumed now, Gabrielle forgot her distress, becoming happy and light-hearted once more.

She was sorry when they reached Rotherbridge, rattling noisily through the High Street, in company with a variety of other vehicles—flays, wagons, drays, and milk-carts. Now the drive was ended. They had turned in at the rectory gates; the brick walls of the rectory garden had swallowed them up. Gabrielle, feeling safe under James's wing—although about to face a whole phalanx of strangers—followed him to the drawing-room: where a large party was assembled, for the double purpose of seeing the lion eat and of hearing him roar. As he entered, the hum of conversation paused; every eye turned in his direction; and a whisper of, "Dear me! So that is Mr. Gordon!" was audible in a distant corner. The rector, an eager, white-haired old man, hurried forward, with a cordial greeting; his wife followed; friend after friend pressed behind, Gabrielle, in the background; felt some curiosity as to how James would receive all this homage. She glanced at him; his countenance remained unchanged. Among those who surrounded him, he stood, to her eyes, like Hyperion among the Satyrs. Calm, courteous, dignified, with all the beauty but apparently none of the susceptibility of youth, the interest which he was exciting produced on him no visible impression. Perhaps, indeed, the opinions of the present company signified, for the most part, little one way or the other. But Gabrielle was sure that, had they signified much, his deportment would have been precisely the same.

She watched in veneration, mingled with a thrill of exulting joy, that he, to others so indifferent, was so mindful of her! Directly a breathing-space came, he turned to rescue her from the oblivion into which she had sun', introduced her to the hostess; then followed her with his eyes, as, escorted by one of the daughters, she quitted the room to unrobe. On returning, she found Olivia, who had arrived during the interim. Gabrielle slipped into a seat at her side.

"Gabrielle! I am so glad to see you! I must not kiss you here, I suppose. Are you well, dear child?"

"Quite, thank you. How happy you look, Olivia!"

"And ought I not to be happy? James has told you about dear Marian? Is it not delightful? Then James himself—I do love to see him

appreciated? He is more handsome than ever this evening—don't you think so, Gabrielle?—with that unusually thoughtful expression, and his eyes so bright! Really, sometimes he seems to me almost perfect! Not genius alone, but good looks, a noble air, winning manners: all are his. He is wonderfully gifted, Gabrielle!"

"You are quite eloquent, Olivia," said Gabrielle, smiling: while inwardly she reëchoed every syllable. But why, as Olivia passed on to some one else, did two lines from a favorite poem come like an undertone, and blend with those words of praise?

"When souls of highest birth
Waste their impassioned might on dreams of earth."

Why should such lines recur to Gabrielle's thoughts just now?

"The worst of Mr. Gordon is his terrible pride!" said a voice behind her.

Gabrielle glanced slightly round. The voice belonged to a downright simple-looking girl, about her own age. Another girl, the person addressed, was eying James with a scrutinizing expression.

"I assure you he is provokingly proud," continued the first speaker. "So self-sufficient! I detest self-sufficient people. They may deify him as they like. In my opinion he's a peacock."

"But so very clever! Surely he has some right to be conceited."

"Nonsense! No one has any right to be conceited. Besides, Mr. Gordon's not conceited. What I hate in him, is grander than conceit, according to some notions—but even more disagreeable and horrible, according to mine!"

At this moment James crossed the room, and took a chair at his fair critic's elbow.

"How do you do, Miss Thompson?" Gabrielle heard. "It is some time since I had the honor of meeting you."

"It is," said Miss Thompson stiffly.

"What glorious weather we are having! When do you leave town, so to speak? You forsake old Rotherbridge every summer, I know."

"Yes, we go next Monday."

"I dare say, now, you look forward to it the whole year through?"

"I do indeed," exclaimed Miss Thompson.

The country was Miss Thompson's hobby as James was aware. He passed on, and led her on, to a discussion of country privileges; sympathizing in her tastes; sometimes telling an amusing anecdote which made both the girls laugh, sometimes making an observation which brought with it a world of new ideas.

"I wonder what she would say of him now?" thought Gabrielle, resentfully. A moment later, James changed his place.

"I'm glad he's gone," observed Miss Thompson.

"Glad!—when he was so agreeable?"

"That's just it. If he'd stayed I should soon have been as blind as other people. He was winning me over fast, as he wins them."

"And as he has won thee," said a voice in Gabrielle's heart. Was she blind, too?

The Town-hall was crowded, chiefly by artisans and shopkeepers; but there was a large minority of other ranks, whom James Gordon's fame had attracted. From the twopenny seats in the background, peered many eager faces, haggard and prematurely aged in the struggle for bread and for life. Among these men—the least prosperous and the most laborious of the manufacturing population of Rotherbridge—James was well known; moreover, highly honored. He wished, and, so far as he had opportunity, he showed that he wished, to help them, to be their friend. And when, on this evening, his handsome face a little flushed, his eye a little brightened, he mounted the platform, their greetings were so noisy, so prolonged, as to elicit more than one "Sh-sh!" and look of scandalized respectability, from sundry decorous persons in front.

"Is yon him as is boyn' to spake? That young chap!" said a stranger among the clappers. "What good ull he do us?—a teaching's gran'feythers?"

"Happen ya'd better hark an' see," retorted a gray-headed man. "Solomon could a toughed his gran'feythers a thing or two, a reckon, when he wore younger nor *yon*."

"Is yon Solomon, then?"

"Nay; but he's Mester Gordon. Mark ma words, lad, Mester Gordon ull be a great mon, soom day."

The patriarch who thus spoke was renowned at Rotherbridge as an oracle and a seer; and the stranger looked at James with more of deference. He condescended, further, to pay attention to the lecture; and before it was half over, he had come to the conclusion that Mester Gordon was a great man already.

So also thought somebody else. Gabrielle sat entranced. The young lecturer, whenever he looked—and he very often looked—in her direction, caught a new inspiration from the glowing face, the earnest eyes. His subject—"Great Men and their Power"—was one in which he felt him-

self peculiarly at home. As he advanced, his eloquence warmed. There was scarcely one inattentive person in the room. Those whom the grandeur of the sentiments could not reach, were unconsciously influenced by the musical rhythm of tone and sentence, and sat in mystified delight. Few, however, failed to comprehend at least the principal portion of that lecture; and many who had entered the room, dull, depressed, with unworthy, perhaps degraded views of life and of humanity, went forth into the world again, resolved henceforward to be or to do something there—something useful and honest, by which, not themselves alone, but their fellow-men, might be ennobled. Perhaps, indeed, in the majority of cases, these aspirations speedily evaporated, and left no track. But surely not in all! And who can say what it is, what it may be, to influence one, even the weakest, of our brother men, for good—to kindle, if but in one poor spirit, a celestial spark?

The lecture was ended. James sat down. The clappings and stampings revived. People began to go out; there was a stir and a bustle. Gabrielle sighed, as we sigh when a beautiful sunset fades, when a voluntary is all played out, when a bright dream gives place to day. The usual comments passed from mouth to mouth. "A capital lecture!" "Very good!" "How clever!" Gabrielle felt inclined to stop her ears. As for her, she could not speak—she could only sit still and think it over. How proud she was, when James, disengaging himself from a bevy of acquaintances, approached her with his own familiar smile, placed her cloak on her shoulders, and led her away, down the long room, in and out among the little chattering groups; who, as he passed, all paused and stared and admired.

In the door-way stood a gentleman, tall and gray-haired; a man with a large forehead and a keen eye. As James, with Gabrielle on his arm, was going out, this gentleman stepped forward, bowed, and intercepted them.

"Mr. Gordon, I have not the honor of your personal acquaintance. But I thought that you would allow me to thank you for the pleasure I have received from you to-night. You know me, perhaps, by name—Geoffrey Savill."

James, who had been listening with his customary nonchalance, started, and a crimson flush spread to the roots of his hair.

For this name of Geoffrey Savill was one of high repute in the literary world. Gabrielle saw, for the first time, in James's manner, a touch of something like nervousness.

"Sir," he said, "this is a great honor, but I must stop short."

"I was passing through Rotherhithe, and your name advertised, and resolved to attend the lecture. I have been amply repaid. I ought now to be on my way to the city, but—" He clasped James's hand and might clasp the hand of a son. "You have a high beginning, Mr. Gordon. Go on and prosper. Raising his hat to Gabrielle, he hurried on, and James stood still, looking after him deep upon his face.

"Gabrielle," said he, "this is true merit;" and his eyes shone.

"It is indeed," cried Gabrielle, equanimously. "And, oh, James! I feel sure that you will 'go on and prosper' towards your glorious aims; and draw others with you."

They were out, under the stars, by the time he took her hand, as it rested on his arm, for a moment held it fast.

"Thank you, Gabrielle," he said. "It is common 'Thank you,' and Gabrielle thanked him in her heart. The pony-carriage was waiting; they drove silently home, through the darkness, and so the evening closed.

It was strange that, despite all his vague sense of uneasiness, of something somewhere, hankered in James's heart, he thought it strange; he told himself he had no idea of the cause. But surely it might have enlightened him! For all through his pillow was haunted—haunted—by one name, one face. The name of a young man—fair-haired, the name was the name of Charlie God-

CHAPTER XIV.

Oneiza called him brother, and the youth
More fondly than a brother, loved the man.
ROBERTSON.

In these days Gabrielle's eyes grew brighter; her color, faint before, deepened to carmine; her shyness, her shrinking from the world, disappeared; her laugh, peculiarly ringing, was often heard; her countenance, as from some inward radiance.

Olivia said that she was developing a new sorrow—as flowers when the winter comes. James said nothing; but his London visits were postponed week by week. He felt lazy, Olivia, and disinclined to move. At last, however, an urgent letter, from their

sister, Lady Peers, dispelled his lethargy, and he departed; leaving Olivia and Gabrielle *tête-à-tête*.

He wrote word, some ten days later, that he had invited a large party to Farnley for August. A shooting-party, he called it; but it would comprise several who ~~and~~ not shoot: among them Mrs. Featherstone and the Bijou. Gabrielle was sitting alone one morning, drawing mental pictures of Farnley with the house full of people; and feeling sad, she hardly knew why: when a ring at the hall-door was followed by the entrance of Wilcox, and a gentleman whose name she did not catch. She looked up, in some astonishment, for Olivia was out, and met the familiar smile of Charlie Godfrey.

Anxiousness and confusion were alike forgotten. She sprang from her seat with a joyful cry of "Oh, Charlie! are you come at last?" and flew toward him. He, no less delighted, evinced his delight in a demonstrative manner; saying over and over again what great happiness it was to see her, to find her well: all the while holding her hand, and gazing with pleased scrutiny into her face.

At length the first greetings were over. Charlie sat down; and Gabrielle, taking her work, made a pretence of continuing it as they talked—every moment fresh topics arising.

"You are at Lorton, I suppose?"

"For five weeks, at least. My aunt means to ask you before long; the house is full just now. I say, Gabrielle," cried Charlie, playing a mild game of ball with a reel of cotton from Gabrielle's work-box—"I say—how awfully romantic my aunt is!"

"Yes, very," said Gabrielle, laughing.

"Upon my word, I never saw any one half so sentimental! I've read of such people in books, you know, but I didn't believe in them. She puzzles me. I don't know what to say, when a pathetic mood is on her. I tried to comfort her at first—she seemed so down in the mouth; but that didn't seem to answer. So now I hold my tongue, and look stupid. I can make neither head nor tail of half her innuendoes. Well!"—Charlie laid down the reel of cotton, and leaned forward on his elbow—"well! tell me all about yourself. You get on well with the Gordons?"

"Oh, so well. I am so fond of them. At least, I only know Olivia and James."

"But they are nice to you?"

"Oh, yes!"

Charlie's solicitude was fully satisfied. There was no possibility of mistaking that fervent tone.

"I am so glad!" he said, as though a burden were removed from his mind—quite, in fact, as though Gabrielle's comfort were his own exclusive concern. "When I come to Meddiscombe, I shall be able to see to you myself. You remember the old agreement—I your true knight forever? Meanwhile, though, it is an immense relief that you are in good hands. At first I could hardly bear to think of you: but now—"

"Now I am happy, Charlie, dear—yes, indeed I am. It seems strange, doesn't it? when one short year ago papa was every thing, humanly speaking, to me, and now he is gone. But it is true."

And, though her eyes filled with tears, her countenance did not belie her words.

"I am so glad," repeated Charlie. There was nothing of self in his gladness. It never occurred to him to question what share he and his affection had had in restoring the sunshine to her life.

"By-the-by, Charlie, have you taken your degree?"

"Yes, I've taken my degree; and I've my leave of old Oxford. The degree is said Charlie—for me, I mean. You would never collect. Lady thing wonderful from me, you know, me to Lorton."

"What is it?" said Gabrielle, she did know her.

"A second in classics, and a third in mathematics. I was relieved, with a it would be rather had been so awfully anxious. Gae'll how I should fasted with Hawkins, at Meddiscombe desired it, you ing, and, upon my word, I feel do examine at your to think that a fellow like him

turn out for a fellow like me, so depriving you," terribly missed. The only going. "Another time, feel compelled to work hard, drop in, and have a at any rate, to supply the blank

me a year; that's one comfort. Morris, deeply remember all he can. But I feel awfully does occasionally. and inefficient. My heart almost! But he wants times."

"My dear true knight, there must be said? I feel a beginning!"

"Ay, so Hawkins said to-day. And that face, so his tone sank—"we've a better strength. So at least our own, thank God! Well!" brightening, resuming the reel of cotton—"what books remember. you been reading lately? What have you been doing? I know so little about your life here—living and somehow—I can't describe it, but I can see—a change has come over you, Gabrielle."

"A change?"

"You needn't look so confused. 'Tis nothing bad. Only that you were perfect in my eyes, before, I should call it an improvement."

"I have seen more of the world, since I came here, you know!"

"Ah, but it's not that sort of change. Never mind, though; one, or at most two, of our old talks will show me the reason. We must keep up our habit of telling each other every thing. You haven't grown reserved, I hope, Gabrielle?"

"I am much the same as I always was," said Gabrielle, uneasily.

Could he suspect? Well, suspect what? she asked herself, catching herself up; and hastening to turn the subject by some trivial question about Eversfield.

She need not have feared. Charlie was far too simple to suspect any thing, as yet.

"Eversfield? Oh, by-the-by. I thought that you would want to hear all about Eversfield. So—it was only a little out of my way—I went there, coming down."

"How good in you, Charlie! Now, please begin at the beginning; and tell me every thing you saw, and every thing that you did."

The work dropped on her lap; she sat with began and eyes uplifted. While Charlie, Gabrielle, ice radiant with satisfaction, proceeded set fades, demands.

a bright drit this moment entered Olivia.

comments p[er]t[er]ted—paused: was confirmed in capital lectures bestowed on Gabrielle a smile Gabrielle felt nes; then warmly greeted Charlie. her, she could a pleasure! When did he come? and think it of to see him. He must stay to James, disengag

quaintances, apply to luncheon; and afterward, iar smile, placed f up-stairs, and he finished his led her away, d[er] thinking what a brick that among the little At length he tore himself passed, all paus[er]th on his return to Lorton.

In the door-pite the heat, walk slowly; his gray-haired; ent! He traversed the park at keen eye. Amiles an hour, whistling a tune; was going by his own thoughts, failed to per-bowed, an individual, carrying a huge manu-

"Mr. puffing and blowing to a painful exp[er]son's advancing in the opposite direction. woul[er]t of this oversight—the individual being havoed no less—was a sudden collision; in p[er]h Charlie's hat flew off; while the manuscript asumed the form of loose leaves, and floated here, there, everywhere.

"Bless me!" exclaimed the individual, stand- ing still in the path—"bless me!"

"I beg your pardon, sir. Forgive my awk- wardness; I was thinking of something else," said Charlie, taking all the blame to himself.

"But never mind. I'll soon set it to rights;" and he set to work to collect the papers.

This service, the individual—who was no other than Mr. Morris—permitted, without so much as an offer of assistance; staring wildly at the young man, meantime; and on receiving the manuscript, repeating, in lieu of thanks, "Bless me!"

"Good-afternoon, sir," said Charlie; and was about to pass on, but Mr. Morris intercepted him, laid on his shoulder a hand encased in a very loose black glove, and exclaimed:

"Such a very strong likeness! Stop one moment! Must be some relation: eh?"

"Some relation to whom, sir?" inquired the youth, in patient politeness, choking down a dis- position to laugh. "My name is Godfrey, if that be any assistance," he added, after a pause; during which Mr. Morris was apparently endeavor- ing, without success, to swallow.

"Ah! Guessed so. Heard of you through Miss Wynn. Fact is, I knew your—your father, a little, once; and your face—"

"That's strange!—I mean, it's strange if you guessed my name by my likeness to my father. I thought I had none. They say that I am the image of my mother."

"They say so, eh? Well, yes, it is your mother's face. I knew her too. That's over now. Done with. Finished. Book closed. Pen wiped. Eh?"

"Sir!" said Charlie, staring, and beginning to fear that he saw before him a lunatic who had lately escaped from the Rotherbridge Asylum. Mr. Morris saw his astonishment, and gustily apologized.

"Excuse me, Mr. Godfrey. I am something of a hermit, and apt to forget my manners. The sight of your face overcame me. Better now. Have you a minute to spare? Should be glad of a little conversation with you. Can you come to my house? Close by."

Charlie hesitated, consulting his watch. But catching in the old man's face an expression of wistful anxiety, his good-nature prevailed, and he allowed himself to be conducted, through a clump of trees, and a small wicket gate, to a pretty, gable-ended cottage, covered with creepers.

"This is my abode," said Mr. Morris, waving his hand toward it. "Gordon's kind thought for me. Very comfortable. Many alleviations, you perceive."

Again he had wandered beyond Charlie's comprehension. The young man felt considera- bly mystified. Ere long he found himself seated

in a room, half study, half parlor; the walls lined with folios, whose best days, like those of their master, were over. In the centre of the room stood a table, where a huge black inkstand, an ancient desk, a letter-case full to overflowing, a heap of quill-pens bitten at the ends, and a pile of blotting-paper, contrasted somewhat strangely with a spray of wild-roses, which bloomed in their midst—thrust, innocent of arrangement, into a tumbler. Two leather-covered arm-chairs, much the worse for wear, standing one on either side the fireplace, were almost the only chairs left to answer the purpose of their construction. The others groaned beneath the burden of books, of coats, or of boots. Over the mantel-piece hung a dingy engraving of the Crucifixion; and a thermometer. The window was partially darkened by the multitude of creepers which climbed about it, forming a framework for a calm—in Charlie's eyes, a beautiful—view. The undulating slopes of the park, its trees, the church-spire, a cottage-roof or two; far beyond, the dim blue outline of the moors; beyond that, the western sky:—Mr. Morris loved a sunset.

"All this time, I have not the honor of knowing your name," said Charlie.

"My name? Morris—Brian Morris. Domestic chaplain to Mr. Gordon. Read prayers in his chapel every morning; sum total of chaplain's duties. Now you know all about me. Any thing else to ask?"

"If you have no objection, I should like to hear where you met my parents."

"Ah!" His tone grew more gusty, more musical; and, as he spoke, he rocked himself to and fro. "It was years ago—five-and-twenty years ago. Your mother, Lady Rose Armytage, came to Leamington. She stayed with an uncle—a clergyman; I was his curate. Eccentric old gentleman, but kind. He took a fancy to me—had me often with him. I saw a great deal of her. She was there a long time. Very pretty—Very, very pretty. Well . . .!"

He sighed, long and deeply, and relapsed into a dream.

"And my father? I thought you—"

"Knew him too. Yes; so I did. He came to Leamington. The play was played out. The curtain fell. Eh?"

"My mother was not married there," said Charlie, increasingly puzzled.

"No. They took her away. The vision faded. Well!"

He roused himself with a sudden start, and proceeded to wipe his spectacles.

"Well, Mr. Godfrey, if you should ever need advice or help—I'm odd in some ways, but I have reaped a good bushel of experience—if you should ever need a friend, or a father, come to me. Will you? Eh? I'd give the world to help you."

"Thank you—you are very kind," said Charlie.

"You look surprised. But times change, you know; you may have trouble yet. And in trouble, nothing like a friend. 'Thine own and thy father's friend forsake not.' Eh? Not an *apropos* quotation, you think? Well, never mind! Do you take any interest in the fate of the Ten Tribes?" inquired Mr. Morris.

Charlie stared again.

"I can't say that I've much considered the subject," he replied.

"I am writing a treatise concerning it; or, rather, hoping to write one. The introduction is not as yet complete. Wonderful alleviations in study!" He produced the bulky manuscript. "What! you mustn't stay?"

"My aunt will be expecting me," said Charlie.

"Aunt! What aunt? Oh! Recollect. Lady Louisa. I heard that she had come to Lorton. But I don't know her. I never did know her. She never came to Leamington. She was much younger than—than— Well! it would be rather a wrench—I can't quite tell how I should manage; but, if you very much desired it, you might take the treatise to examine at your leisure."

"Oh! I couldn't think of so depriving you," cried Charlie, hurriedly rising. "Another time, perhaps, you'll allow me to drop in, and have a look at it here."

"Just so," answered Mr. Morris, deeply relieved. "That's what Gordon does occasionally. A wonderful head, Gordon's! But he wants trouble. Sooner or later, no doubt, he'll have it. Then you'll remember what I have said? I feel an interest in you. Will you believe me? Eh?"

It was impossible to look into that face, so furrowed, so kindly, and disbelieve. So at least thought Charlie.

"Thanks. You're very good. I'll remember. I'll come and see you again, before long."

He extended his hand; and it was wrung with a vehemence which Charlie would indeed have appreciated, had he known the limpness of Mr. Morris's ordinary grasp. As it was, he returned to Lorton happy in the thought that he had found a friend.

But his spirits were not so high as when he

had quitted Gabrielle; his merry whistle was still. For he felt as one who, opening a book at hazard, comes upon the final pages of a sorrowful tale. Pages commonplace in plot, perhaps, and in language; but the more commonplace, the more universal—and a tale that has been told once may be told again.

CHAPTER XV.

"O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
By that you swore to withstand?"

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"GABRIELLE, did you not hear from Lorton this morning?"

"Oh yes—I had almost forgotten! Charlie is obliged to go at once into Surrey; his uncle there, Sir Henry Godfrey, is ill."

"Poor fellow, what a sudden blow!"

"It can hardly be called a blow," said Gabrielle, laughing. "Sir Henry is a great hypochondriac; he has often sent for Charlie in the same way before."

"Mr. Godfrey will return to Lorton?"

"Oh, yes. As soon as he can leave his uncle."

"And then, I trust, Lady Louisa will ask you again, dear child!" said Olivia, somewhat astonishing Gabrielle by a sympathetic kiss.

It was the day on which James, with Marian, Cissy, and Admiral Cavendish, were to arrive from London. The hours rolled slowly and restlessly by. Gabrielle could settle to nothing. As evening drew on she grew more and more nervous; her face flushed, her heart fluttered at every sound. She dressed early, and went to the chapel organ. In this state of excitement she dared not encounter the keen scrutiny of James's eye. Before he came she must, she would, be composed.

So she took the "Elijah" from the pile of music-books, and forced herself to play steadily, over and over, "O rest in the Lord." Gradually its deep calm, its unutterable peace, breathed stillness into Gabrielle's spirit. The peal of the organ appeared to her like some angelic voice. "O rest," it said. "Rest, fevered throbbings—anxious imaginings—conflicting fears! O rest in the Lord!"

Something, in air or words, brought memories of Eversfield; of a summer Sunday, years ago, when her father had preached upon this very text, and when, afterward, he and she and Charlie Godfrey had walked up and down under

the trees in the rectory garden, listening to the nightingales, and discussing the sermon. What happy, innocent days those days had been! But they were ended now.

A voice at her elbow. She started and looked round. There stood James; his coat a little dusty, after the railway journey; his hair a little ruffled; his face a little flushed; but so handsome, so noble—so glad, evidently to see her! Was it very surprising that Gabrielle's heart leaped up as their eyes met? But the effort to conceal her feelings made her seem constrained, almost cold. James was sensible of something very like a pang, far down in the depths of his soul, as she rose with composure from her seat and allowed her hand to rest, for one instant, passively, in his earnest clasp.

"Are you sorry that I am come back, Gabrielle?" said he, involuntarily. The next moment his pride revolted, and he wished that he had held his tongue.

"Why should I be sorry, James? I am glad, of course. How have you enjoyed yourself in London?"

"Well enough.—What were you playing? 'O rest in the Lord!' You have learned that since I left."

"Yes, I have practised a good deal. I did not mean to be here when you all arrived, though. The clock in the hall must have stopped."

"No—it was merely the music that stopped your ears. The same thing has happened before, I think. Now will you be introduced to Marian and Cissy?"

She followed him to the drawing-room. The two new cousins stood with Olivia in the window, eagerly talking. As Gabrielle entered they paused, and came forward to greet her: Marian polite and indifferent, Cissy scrutinizing and cold. Gabrielle had not expected from them any great cordiality at first; she should be thankful, she thought, if they would only not regard her as a bore! But she did wonder why Cissy scanned her with eyes so severely inquiring, and then so immediately turned away to speak to Admiral Cavendish. She was wondering still, when Gypsy, Cissy's little dog—which had been left, during her absence, at home—rushed into the room, and scampered round his mistress in a state of wild delight. Cissy, falling upon her knees, proceeded forthwith to embrace him; Olivia and the rest drew near to laugh and comment, and Gabrielle took advantage of being left to herself to make a leisurely survey of the strangers.

The admiral had the air of a kind-hearted and simple-minded sailor; he had also a trim, upright figure, just below the middle height, fine features, and a weather-beaten complexion. His eyes, as they rested on Marian, were half lover-like, half paternal, as suited his superior years. She—a pretty, graceful girl, with chestnut hair, a small aquiline nose, and light eyes—seemed gentle, agreeable, and, if a little, only a little, affected. But Cissy, despite the severe glances, took Gabrielle's fancy most.

Cissy was very pretty; much prettier than Marian: and more unique in style. In height, she rose far above both her sisters: outstripping the average standard. Her hair was brown, with a golden tinge: hair that glanced and gleamed in the sun. Her bright, dark eyes, had they been a trifle larger, would almost have rivalled her brother's; while her little *piquante* nose and animated mouth gave a peculiar character to her face.

Her chief charm, however, lay in traits less easily described. Gabrielle had never before seen so much play of feature, expression so rapidly varying. Now it was bright this countenance, now clouded, now coaxing, now full of mischief; never two minutes together quite the same. Of a similar genus were her movements; perfectly graceful, but volatile and sudden as those of a child. And as a child, in fact, although in years she more than equalled Gabrielle, Olivia, and the admiral also, appeared to consider her: a fascinating, half-spoilt child; a creature to be petted, admired, humored, and made allowance for.

Gabrielle watched her, considerably amused, until, at length, she ran out of the room. Then Gabrielle turned, and found that James, leaning with folded arms, against a window in the background, was watching *her*. Meeting her eye, he moved, and called to the admiral, that, if they meant to dress this evening, they might as well set about it. This proved the signal for a general dispersion, and Gabrielle was left alone. She went out upon the terrace. The sunset glory was beginning to illuminate the sky. But she did not revel in it as usual; to-night there was glory everywhere.

"Olivia," said James—who reappeared in the drawing-room full twenty minutes earlier than his fellow-travellers—"Olivia, how bright and well Gabrielle looks!"

"Yes; I have observed a great difference in her lately. We need be at no loss for the cause, I imagine," and Olivia smiled.

"What do you mean?" said James.

She looked up in surprise; his tone was so sharp, so impatient.

"Can't you guess? She has seen Mr. Godfrey. He lunched with us one day last week. A most pleasant young man; and devoted, evidently, to Gabrielle."

"How interesting!"

"You naughty boy, James—speaking in that scornful tone! It quite did me good, I assure you, to see them together. She was so very happy, dear child."

James started from his seat, flung open the piano, and proceeded to thunder forth "*Cujus Animam*." He might have been a little more polite, Olivia thought, as she applied, in silent meekness, to her tatting.

"Cissy, do you know what is the matter with James?" she asked as, during the dusky interval between dinner and tea, they sat in the drawing-room, talking softly; Gabrielle within earshot, although not joining in the conversation; Marian and the admiral *tête-à-tête* upon a distant sofa—"Cissy, do you know what is the matter with James, to make him so gloomy and depressed?"

"Is he gloomy and depressed?" said Cissy; "I must watch him. I can't tell what is the matter with him, I'm sure. His spirits were good enough in London: only he has become a prey to fits of moodiness, which made Annie wonder whether he were in love. Annie's head is always full of interesting suspicions."

"James in love!" exclaimed Olivia; "James in love!" She could get no further.

"Oh, Olivia! you dear silly, simple, unobservant old thing!" cried Cissy, impulsively kissing her; "human nature is a sealed book to you, with all your common-sense. Why shouldn't he fall in love, pray? He's a man; and what is there to hinder his falling in love like other men? Do you look upon him as a sort of anomaly, made of different stuff from the rest? To be sure, he's very high-flown, and very high-and-mighty; and he can write and talk very grandly. But what of that? If a cock said, 'I'm an angel,' would you believe him?"

"But James despises love so!"

"That just shows how little he knows (poetry, Olivia!) of his own nature. Wait till he's tried, my dear. Not that I have discerned any certain symptom of the catastrophe, as yet. Mooniness is nothing; I'm often moony myself. Certainly he's an outrageous flirt; but that's nothing either."

"James a flirt! Unintentionally, then," cried Olivia, half doubtful, half indignant.

"My dear, in London, he flirts right hand and left. I have watched him, often—don't look so shocked—going on, first with one girl, then with another. And it is such fun to see how flattered they all seem, and how ridiculously delighted! It provokes me, though; they bow before him, as if he were the Grand Sultan. He, indeed!"

"Cissy! Cissy!"

"And you are just like them, Olivia. I call it idolatry—downright, barefaced idolatry—worship of intellect. I've got no intellect myself; and I don't want any. I'd far rather be good and kind and pleasant."

"And is not James good and kind and pleasant? Oh, Cissy!"

"Well, yes—" said Cissy, with a shade of compunction. "But I can't adore him, nevertheless; and I can't think of him as any thing but my brother, with whom I have played and quarrelled, many a time. Then on some points he's most dreadfully mistaken. You may shake your head; he *is*—and so, one day, you'll see."

Olivia compressed her lips. There was no use in arguing with Cissy.

At this moment the subject of their conversation appeared in the door-way; and announced that the evening was delightful after the heat, and that the stars were splendid. Would any one like to join him on the terrace?

"Not I, thank you," replied Cissy, closing her eyes in mock languor. "I'm far too tired. And I want Olivia, so you can't have her either. Go away, please."

"Lazy child! This is what comes of three months' dissipation. Marian, what do you say?"

"I! I couldn't stir another step to-night, except to go to bed," she answered, in her gentle, half-affected voice. The admiral did not speak. He was enjoying his twilight chat with Marian far too much to exchange it for a quarter-deck walk with her brother.

But still James lingered.

"Gabrielle," said he, after a minute's silence; "you are not tired, are you?"

"Not at all, thank you, James;" and the color stole up into her face.

"Doesn't it seem a shame to waste an evening like this in the house?"

Gabrielle hesitated; while Olivia, who believed that she was afraid of taking cold, made haste to assure her that the air was exceedingly mild, and that she might do as she chose.

"I think I would rather stay here," she replied, catching through the semi-darkness a sharp glance from Cissy's sparkling eyes. James

paused a moment; then crossed the room, and stood beside Gabrielle's chair.

"Have I done any thing to offend you?" he asked, in a voice too low for other ears.

"No—"

"Then why won't you come?"

Again Gabrielle hesitated. She was "making a fuss," which she hated. But Cissy's eyes!

"Why won't you come?" he repeated.

No one had ever spoken to her in such a tone, before. It was a tone that she could not resist. "I will come," she answered boldly, and rose.

"That's all right," said James, in his ordinary manner. "Cissy, won't you change your mind?"

"No. Don't tease. Go, if you're going," said Cissy, unceremoniously.

"Olivia, you ought to know," she exclaimed, as the door closed. "Are you quite—quite certain that Gabrielle—that James—"

"What about them?" asked Olivia.

"Are you certain that James is not smitten with—with any one? Have you noticed nothing?"

"Nothing whatever. I told you as much before."

And Cissy was silent.

"Olivia is half-witted, where James is concerned," she said to herself, proceeding to chatter upon other topics.

Meanwhile James, on the terrace, was giving Gabrielle an account of his doings in London; of an interview with Mr. Geoffrey Savill; and so forth. Thence, by degrees, he launched into subjects still more interesting. He confided to her an idea which he had carried in his mind, he said, for years—the idea of a great book, to be written some day, a Philosophical Review of European History. Ever since the first conception of this idea, it had been—he told her—more or less before him; at all times, in all places, all societies. It had flowed on, like an under-current, beneath the minor interests of life, and had gathered from each fresh grist for its mill. He was by no means certain, however, that the undertaking, when it came to the point, might not prove to be beyond his powers of attainment.

Did Olivia know of this? asked Gabrielle. Olivia? He should rather think not! He never spoke on those matters to his sisters. Women made such mountains of molehills, always, and were so fond of chattering.

"But, James," said Gabrielle, "I am a woman."

He stopped short. Yes, certainly, she was a woman; and yet—how was it that, somehow, he

had grown to regard her, less in her own person, than as a part of himself?

"Did you fancy that you were talking to a man?" she asked, smiling, as he still paused.

"There are exceptions to every rule, Gabrielle. Some women have sense; and you are one. Or rather, you will be one; you are a mere child as yet."

"I am not a child. I am nineteen and eight months. I shall be twenty in November," said Gabrielle.

"Well! let it pass," replied James, impatiently; and returned to his Philosophical Review.

After this evening followed a fortnight unmarked by any event of external importance. To Gabrielle, its one trial was Cissy's continual scrutiny. Cissy repelled the few friendly, albeit timid, overtures on which Gabrielle ventured, with a frigidity the more striking from its contrast to her usual childish vivacity. Marian, though cold by nature, and at this time absorbed in her *trousseau* and the admiral, was always amiable, always polite. But Cissy—Gabrielle could not understand it! Her interest in this pretty and capricious cousin, augmented, nevertheless, day by day. Her wildness, fearlessness, and love of mischief, made Gabrielle think of Undine. She could, when she chose, emulate even Olivia, in staidness and good sense; but she usually preferred skipping about the house, like a malicious fairy: playing practical jokes, after an innocent fashion, and teasing every one whom she happened to meet. Every one, that is, save Marian. Marian did not approve of being teased, and was powerless to comprehend a joke. She and Cissy had "gone together," and had dressed alike, throughout the days of nursery and school-room; and Cissy's *esprit de corps* forbade her to injure an old comrade.

Often she would rove away, alone, or accompanied by Gypsy; and return, after several hours, laden with wild-roses, honeysuckle, foxgloves, and such like spoil; of which fanciful garlands adorned her own hat and Gypsy's neck.

"I soon grow tired of people," she told Olivia. "But flowers are always fresh. A wild-rose is worth two women and four men."

One of her chief amusements consisted in galloping round the park, on a pony named Spitfire. She liked to gallop all the mettle out of him, she said; and the longer that it lasted, the better. She loved all animals, all birds and insects; and had collected a motley assemblage of pets; whose entire charge she took on herself, and of which she was never weary. She declared,

however, that she would part with every one, if she could but get a lion in exchange. It would be such fun to tame him! Only she feared that, directly he did grow tame, and fond of her, she should hate him.

Fits and starts were the rule of Cissy's existence. She would sometimes rush to the piano, and practise, perhaps, for half an hour with perfect steadiness; but, in the middle of a bar, would rise abruptly, as she had sat down, and dart away—days elapsing before she touched another note. Similar impulses—impulses for reading, for drawing, for gardening—would follow in the interim. To two things alone was she constant: the flowers and her pets.

In society, she was at times delightful, at times greatly the reverse. Some persons called her "uncertain;" some, "charming;" some, "a horrid little thing." Each party spoke the truth, as each had found it. For she never attempted to disguise either her likes or her dislikes; which were both, especially the latter, extremely decided.

Such was Cissy's surface-life. Gabrielle, however, suspected that beneath it lay much of which the world in general guessed nothing. One feeling lay there, of which she guessed nothing either; a growing attraction toward herself. For Cissy could not succeed in hating Gabrielle. Scrutiny, however suspicious, served only to reveal the truthfulness, the transparent simplicity, of Gabrielle's character; and to form in the mind of the young censor a sentiment of respect.

"Marian," said she, one day—the last of that quiet fortnight; "Marian, I don't believe a word of the Featherstones' hints about Gabrielle."

"What hints?" inquired Marian, not raising her eyes from the music which she was copying.

"Why, as to James—that she made up to him, and so forth. Since we came home, I have watched her incessantly."

"Dear! What dreadful trouble!" said Marian.

"And I have arrived at the conclusion that it would be simply impossible for Gabrielle to make up to any one! 'Twas all that horrid little The's spite; I see through it now. I hope, Marian, you'll believe it no more."

"I never did believe it," said Marian; "I mean, I did not think twice about it."

"Didn't you? Why, it stirred me to the depths—turned my soul into a saline draught. The idea of a little designing interloper coming among us, and getting over Olivia, and even James, like that, was more than my weak nature

could bear. But I'll have my revenge on The. She will be here next week; and I'll find means, as old nurse used ambiguously to threaten. Poor Gabrielle! What a shame! Exactly the other way, too."

"How the other way?"

"Can't you see, stupid? It is James who is making up to Gabrielle; not Gabrielle who is making up to James. He follows her like a shadow; and he looks at her 'perpetual:' quite in the orthodox way. He's assuredly caught at last; and delightful it is to behold! I'll give him, for a wedding-present, a scroll, with 'Pride must have a Fall' on it, and a border of little gold eagles sitting in doves' nests. Or turning into doves themselves! that would be better: only how could I depict the process? Marian, help me."

"What nonsense you talk, dear Cissy! But, now I think of it, James certainly is rather attentive to Gabrielle."

"Rather attentive! What must very attentive be? As to Olivia, she seems striving to emulate that worthy character, Mrs. Bat's Eyes, in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I won't enlighten her, though; it would be so odious for Gabrielle. By-the-by, Olivia imagines her to be all but engaged to Charlie Godfrey, or Garlie Chodfrey, or something of that nature. I know better. Certain people I can read like books; and Gabrielle is one."

"How absurd! A girl whom you've known a fortnight!"

"Time has very little to do with that sort of thing, my dear. However, you are not expected to understand it. So go on with your copyings; and think about 'The Sea, the Sea, the bounding Sea.' You'll be more at home there."

And Cissy, valuing the whole way, departed to the school-room: where Gabrielle was taking advantage of a rainy afternoon, to practise her singing exercises.

"Gabrielle, I'm come to make a confession."

Gabrielle turned round on the music-stool; and stared, much amazed.

"I've been the Essence of Unkindness to you; and I'm very sorry. I won't never be so no more."

"My dear Cissy! I—"

"No; don't say you've not noticed it; don't tell a story. But it wasn't all my own fault. At least—I can't tell you any more," said Cissy, abruptly. "You forgive me? We must kiss and be friends, then. Suppose we make a compact:

"If you'll love me, as I'll love you,
No knife shall cut our love in two."

Gabrielle laughed, and submitted herself to a demonstrative hug. Thus ended their first and last feud.

"Now finish your singing; and then, if you don't mind, we'll have some battledore and shuttlecock in the passage up-stairs. Battledore and shuttlecock is my one consolation on a day like this.—Well, Richard?"

"A note for Miss Wynn, if you please, ma'am. The man is waiting."

Richard tendered on his salver a black-edged envelope, delicately perfumed.

"From Lorton," said Gabrielle, breaking the seal; "an invitation, I dare say. Yes—" looking up a moment later—"Lady Louisa wants me to go there to-morrow."

"To-morrow? What a short notice!"

"A beloved friend of former days, she says, has returned unexpectedly from India; and has offered herself, by an old agreement, to Lady Louisa, for an unlimited stay. She will bring two daughters, two maids, and a governess, so there will then be no room for me."

"And Lady Louisa wants to get you before they come?"

"Yes; or I should miss Charlie Godfrey."

"It is a dreadful bore," said Cissy; "I wish I had made friends with you sooner. We shall have no time, now, to get properly acquainted with one another."

"But I shall be back in a week," said Gabrielle, smiling, as she left the room in search of Olivia.

Olivia, of course, was delighted. Oh, by all means, Gabrielle must go. In her secret soul, indeed, Olivia felt no doubt but that results the most important would follow. Gabrielle, therefore, wrote to accept the invitation, and wished the while that she could have done so with more pleasure. Returning to the school-room, she found Cissy impatient for the battledore and shuttlecock. Whereupon the piano was closed, and they ran up-stairs forthwith.

Now was Cissy in her element. She excelled in the art of "Spitfire," and Gabrielle, under her tuition, soon bade fair to excel likewise. From battledore to battledore the shuttlecock flew, insulted, Cissy observed, wherever it went.

"Two hundred. Two hundred and one. Two hundred and two. Glorious! Glorious!—Go away, James; we shall miss.—Never mind him, Gabrielle—Two hundred and five. Oh, Gabrielle! oh, you stupid child."

"I am very sorry," said Gabrielle, laughing and coloring as the shuttlecock flew past her;

"it was James's fault. He made me nervous, standing there."

"I make you nervous?" exclaimed James; whom the rap-rap of the combat had attracted to the door of his room. "Nay, Gabrielle, that is hardly fair; when I 'neither spoke nor moved,' nor did any thing in any way to arrest the flow of your genius.—Cissy, where can I find another battledore? I should like to have a try at it myself."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" cried Cissy, jumping and clapping her hands. "Condescension, indeed! Hercules—or who was he? among the pigmies! England's master-mind playing battledore and shuttlecock. What shall we see next?"

"Where can I find a battledore?" repeated James.

"Go down-stairs, mysterious visitant from a superior realm; look in the school-room cupboard, and there you'll see your own old thing, with your name scratched upon it. Bring it here, and meanwhile Gabrielle and I will consider whether we dare admit you to our meaner society."

Before her sentence was finished James was in the hall, and a moment later up-stairs again, battledore in hand. His school-boy days might have returned, so eager did he seem.

"I hope you'll show yourself a 'stoopid,' as Wilcox hath it," said Cissy.

But when did James ever show himself a "stoopid," in external things? A steady eye, a sure hand, he possessed to perfection. Five successive games were cut short by some inadvertence on the part of Gabrielle or Cissy, and through five successive games James's battledore sent forth stroke after stroke with the same firm, even sound.

"Oh, you provoking boy! Must you do every thing well?" said Cissy—petulantly throwing her own away, and sinking on the floor to rest.

James smiled a calm smile of superiority. Cissy was infuriated.

"Oh Johnny, she cried,
I'll punish your pride!"

she mentally quoted.

Then, in an unconcerned tone:

"Gabrielle, what time do you go to-morrow?"

"Soon after luncheon," said Gabrielle.

"Go!" repeated James, at once on the *qui vive*. "Where are you going?"

Cissy, in spirit, clapped her hands.

"Why! has she not told you, James? When

I am expecting a treat I tell the whole world. She's going to Lorton, to be sure; to meet"—Here the naughty child hesitated, glanced at Gabrielle, and tried to look confused—"to meet an—an old—acquaintance—or friend, isn't it, Gabrielle?"—proceeding to hum:

"We twa ha' paidelt i' the burn,
Free morn to eventyne."

James also glanced at Gabrielle. Her color rose. Again a spiritual clap on the part of Cissy.

"I'm sorry you're going, dear; we shall miss you. At least, I shall. But, of course, you can't reëcho the sentiment. New friends are not old ones, everybody knows, and we're all new friends here. *We've* got no sweet 'auld acquaintance' with her, Gypsy, my darling, have we?—or 'days of lang syne.'"

A pause. Gabrielle was silent, a little embarrassed. James was silent also. He leaned against the wall, looking down—apparently at his boots.

"What's the matter, James? What makes you so glumpy? I'm rested. Will you have another game?"

"I!" cried James, with a start. "No more games for me! I've wasted time enough."

He ran down-stairs, snatched up a straw hat which lay on the hall-table, and, banging the door behind him, went out into the rain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Silence, beautiful voice!

Still! I will hear you no more."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"MR. GORDON, my lady."

Lady Louisa rose from the depths of an ancient sofa.

"How do you do, Mr. Gordon? I am glad to see you. In fact, you are just the person whom I wished to see. Pray sit down."

"I ventured to call," said James; "I was passing through Lorton, and I thought that I might as well bring a letter which came by this morning's post, for my cousin—for Miss Wynn."

"How excessively kind!" said Lady Louisa;

"Gabrielle will be much obliged to you. I will take charge of the letter; she is out, just now, with my children and Mr. Godfrey. They are not likely to return at present: can you spare me a few moments? it would be such an excellent opportunity to discuss one all-important subject. You must not think me inter-

If you are her guardian, I am his aunt, you see."

"May I ask to whom you are alluding?" said James, stiffly.

His manner alarmed Lady Louisa.

"Forgive me, Mr. Gordon. Bear with me. I know I am tiresome. I am usually tiresome: to myself and to every one else. Will you allow me to trouble you for that fan?"

James handed her the fan, which lay on a small table at his elbow. Then he sat still, and waited; externally very *nonchalant*, very calm, very cold—inwardly all commotion, each moment an agony of suspense.

Lady Louisa fanned herself for a considerable time, with every symptom of exhaustion. She then removed a refractory stopper from a scent-bottle, and inhaled strong odors. Finally, she replaced the stopper, smoothed the flaxen ringlets, folded her fat white hands in her lap, over an embroidered pocket-handkerchief, and brought her eyes to bear upon James's face.

"Mr. Gordon," she said, in a solemn tone, "you appear to be unacquainted with a circumstance, which—holding, as you do, the responsible position of Gabrielle's guardian—I think it my duty to lay before you. Young girls are by nature reticent and shrinking; Gabrielle is peculiarly so. Any way, we could scarcely expect her to make a *confidant* of you; who are—forgive me—in appearance at least, so young yourself. But a mother, Mr. Gordon; and a widowed mother: who has experienced all: she may be regarded as a safe *confidante*, and as a competent judge in such matters. Surely, my dear Mr. Gordon, you agree with me?"

"I should agree with you, no doubt, Lady Louisa, if I had any idea to what matters you were referring."

"My dear Mr. Gordon, how can you ask? I refer to *les affaires du cœur*. You, being—as I observed—young, understand them, doubtless, as none, save the young—and widowed hearts whose chief comfort consists in the recollection of youth—are able to understand them. Mr. Gordon, am I not right?"—and again, with a gentle smile, she smoothed the flaxen ringlets.

"I really know nothing about it," said James, frigidly.

"Ah! your time is yet to come, then; but I am forgetting my subject. You may have heard Gabrielle mention my nephew, Charles Godfrey?"

"I had the honor of meeting him last year at Eversfield," said James, clinching his hand.

"Ah! no doubt. He loves Eversfield. His tenderest associations are connected with it. But, Mr. Gordon, there is one whom he loves better than Eversfield—better than the whole world besides. And that one is—cannot you guess?"

"I must beg to be excused," said James, more frigidly than ever.

"That one is your dear ward—Gabrielle. In words, he has not, as yet, told her his secret. He is too honorable to speak before he can offer her a home. But she understands him; clearly, thoroughly: and she is happy. They trust one another. It is beautiful, really beautiful, to see them together!"

"Indeed?" said James.

Lady Louisa was disappointed. She had expected to find him deeply interested, sweetly sympathizing: a Werther or a Lindorff. But here he sat, unmoved; an unimpressible young man of the nineteenth century.

"I trust that you will erect no obstacles, Mr. Gordon," she resumed, closing her eyes, with a sigh; "I felt it a solemn duty to enlighten you; but I shall never forgive myself, if you throw cold water upon their hopes. It is dangerous to oppose the stream of love. Its current—"

James could stand this no longer. He took up his hat.

"I am much obliged to you, Lady Louisa. Should your conjectures be founded on fact—"

"Founded on fact!" cried Lady Louisa, startled from her languor; and the flaxen ringlets appeared to stiffen, as with horror—"founded on fact! There is no doubt whatever! I—"

"Mistakes of that nature—or of any nature—are not uncommon. Time will prove. For the present, we can't do better, I think, than leave things to take their course. I must ask you to excuse me, now. I am pressed for time. You will kindly deliver the letter? Good-morning!"

"Good-morning," repeated Lady Louisa, quite overpowered. James bowed himself out, and she sank breathless on her sofa.

"A hard, cold young man! Poor Gabrielle! Many must be her trials! His extreme sharpness!—how can her sensitive nature sustain it? He has made me feel quite faint. I must ring for some red lavender; or my nerves will give way."

"Sickly, sentimental fool!" muttered James, as he set spurs to his horse; "I shall give Gabrielle a hint not to accept her invitations too

often. She's enough to poison any girl's mind. Does Gabrielle make a *confidante* of her, I wonder? I don't believe it. Gabrielle has more sense. 'Tis all her confounded imagination. What business has she to palm her fancies on me—as though they were truth?"

Then James began to ponder those fancies. And, as he pondered, he felt that, however much he might dislike Lady Louisa, he disliked Charlie Godfrey more. In fact, that he hated Charlie Godfrey; that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to hear that the very name was blotted out from the face of the earth.

He galloped faster and faster; on and on; regardless of heat, of dust, of passers-by. Far away from Farnley, far beyond Lorton: until, as he neared the moors, the ever-steepening ground compelled him to slacken his pace. He then saw, for the first time, that his horse was thoroughly exhausted. The poor creature's sides were streaming, his lungs heaving, every inch of spirit gone from him. James, full of compunction, dismounted; and led him some paces onward, to a small inn, which stood by the wayside. The bench at the door was occupied by a party of navvies; whom the landlord's little daughter was in the act of supplying with pipes, and mugs of beer. As James approached, she paused; and every eye was turned in the direction of the horse.

"Sithee, Bill! He's loike to drop," exclaimed one of the men.

"He is indeed," said James; "just call the ostler, will you? I must get him to the stable."

"Poor Yarrow—poor old fellow," he murmured, bending over the horse's neck; "do you wonder what possessed your master? I'm sure he wonders the same."

"Eh, but he is blown! Has he been a boltin' wi' ya, sir?" inquired the ostler; to whom James was a stranger.

"No," said James, shortly; "he is knocked up, though, as you perceive. I must leave him here, and a servant will call for him to-morrow."

"It's a sin and a shame," muttered the ostler, as he led Yarrow away—"a sin and a shame, ta roide a poor beast ta death, a this how. He wouldn't fancy it, hissen, o reckon!"

A quarter of an hour later, however, James appeared in the stable; carefully inspected the accommodations; anxiously examined the horse; gave minute orders for his comfort: and tipped the ostler. That worthy person then softened; and subsequently informed the navvies, that t' boss *had* been a boltin', and t' mester wor too high to own it. An' who could blame him?

Meanwhile, James had started upon his long homeward walk. The sun was setting when he reached Farnley; dinner was nearly over. He looked into the dining-room—gave some brief explanation—ran up-stairs, three steps at a time—dressed hurriedly, and ran down again. His social duties should not suffer for the turmoil of his mind. He made himself agreeable to his future brother-in-law, and to Mr. Morris, who was also present; submitted to a long catechism from Cissy, concerning Gabrielle, Charlie Godfrey, and Lorton; advised with Olivia upon some doubtful point in the family arrangements; asked Marian to sing, and listened with apparent interest, while she did so: finally, after the ladies had retired, smoked a cigar upon the terrace with the admiral.

But right thankful was he, when the admiral retired also, and when all was still for the night. He allowed Wilcox to fasten the bolts and bars, and to follow the rest of the world to bed. Then he went into the chapel, and let himself out again, through a door which opened upon the park. And he would not, he was resolved, return, until he had faced the worst; until he had penetrated the recesses of that mystery, his own heart; and had formed his resolutions for the future.

Among a clump of Scotch firs, stood an old-fashioned sun-dial, surrounded by three mossy steps. Here, toward midnight, James sat; prepared for the battle.

Long had that battle been warded off; long had he shrunk from any shadow of parting with the sweet visions which might—nay, would—be shattered in the fray. But shrinking was over now. The time was come. He must lay his self-deceptions by, forever and forever.

First, then, a rigid self-analysis: into the thick of which he boldly plunged.

Why—this was a leading question—why did the bare mention of one unimportant name, arouse in his breast passions so stormy, so painful? Why did he hate Charlie Godfrey?

Not easily was this aspiring young philosopher brought to confess a weakness which he had hitherto imagined to have no part in his nature; or to be, at any rate, completely under his control. But he had undertaken the task of searching out the truth; and he would carry it through. He was jealous of Charlie Godfrey.

And why? Could that simple youth in any way bear comparison with himself? Could that boy so much as pretend to rival the author of the "Four Essays," in ambition, in intellect, in ge-

nus? No—it was nothing of this. All that excited such bitter, such burning envy, was the place which Charlie Godfrey occupied—or might in the future occupy—in the insignificant affections of an insignificant girl. That was all! Nothing grander. Nothing more worthy to set a philosopher's heart on fire.

And why did James thus value Gabrielle's favor?—He paused—looking up into the sky. All there was calm, still, pure. Myriads of stars fixed on him their passionless eyes: censuring, so it seemed, his agitation. He turned to earth again; and his gaze encountered the trees: the grand trees which generations long dead had seen, much as he saw them now. Stately—self-contained—firm—they also reproached him. “Shall all nature be so serene, so unmoved?” he thought—“and I sway by a breath?”

Had he not, years ago, resolved that no inferior aims should actuate his mind? that he would pitch his standard on the mountain-top, on the highest height of all? that matters, which to other men were life or death, he would despise—soaring beyond? Why then—to repeat his question—did he thus value the favor of a girl?

Because he loved her.

Because a place in his soul, a place of which he himself had been ignorant, she had found and filled.

Because glory, and honor, and power, and knowledge, and philosophy, and life, and death, were to him all as nothing in comparison with her: in comparison with her love.

This, then, it was, which had disturbed him of late; which had drawn off his attention from higher things; which had robbed his favorite studies of their zest; which had placed his peace of mind at the mercy of a smile or a frown; which had led him to rest satisfied with present enjoyment, instead of aiming at future greatness; which had, in fact, transformed his whole nature.

This that he had scorned. This that turned men into idolaters, and women into fools. That, since the creation of the world, had been bound up with almost every thing bad, or contemptible, or unfortunate, done or suffered—had ruined souls and bodies—had blinded judgments—had broken hearts: had, in short, worked mischief, irreparable. This it was that had taken possession of him. Even Love.

Yes. Even Love. But how? determined as he had been against it. What had ensnared him, contrary to his will? Not beauty. Deep as was his humiliation, he raised his head proudly, as

he thought, that, at any rate, one, the most common, degradation, was spared him! Gabrielle had a sweet face, a taking face; but she had none of that dangerous, irresistible loveliness.

Was it intellect? No—her abilities were above the average; but that was not her charm in his eyes. He might admire, he could never love, a woman for her intellect. It was something indescribable, something unfathomable. He had known hundreds of girls in his day—brilliant girls, graceful girls, pretty girls. Their society had refreshed him; he had felt secretly flattered by the consciousness that almost any one of them he might win, did he care to win her, for his own.

But he never had so cared—never till he knew Gabrielle.

Well! it was useless to probe further into causes and motives. The mischief was done. How could it be repaired? How, indeed? James had imagined himself to be cool by nature; he now discovered his mistake. He felt at this moment that, if he gave up Gabrielle, he must give up happiness forever. But, after all, was happiness necessary? Was there not something grander, more divine, than happiness—something which still might lie within his reach, though Gabrielle were far removed? It was better, he told himself, infinitely better, to be great than to be happy.

Yet his weaker nature recoiled. Before him rose a vision of life with Gabrielle—of what it would be to have her always with him, to have her for his own, to know that she loved him, as he—God help him!—loved her. But . . . where, in such a life, would ambition be? where the purposes of former days? How, in a home so radiant, so Eden-like, could he do otherwise than rest, as other men rested—the calm, domestic circle hemming him in, the wider range shut out?

Then James remembered a sentence which he had read long ago, and which said that, to do great in thought and in action, a man must suffer greatly. Should he shrink from suffering if such were its results? Should he not rather meet it and be strong, as others had been before him?

He left his seat on the old mossy steps, and roved farther into the park. He walked to a brook, like a restless spirit, battling with himself. This was a conflict—so it seemed to him—between his higher and his lower nature. That night, so he believed, would determine the relative position of each.

Three hours that conflict raged; at last

self out. James returned to the sun-dial, down, as before, upon the steps. By this he was thoroughly tired; his head ached; his strength seemed almost spent. But, though he had made up his mind, he had still in certain definite resolutions. He set to work once more.

First, he would avoid Gabrielle. He would omit those dangerous organ-lessons; he would no longer invite her to twilight walks, to rides or drives. All that, and with it the sweetness of his existence, must come to

an end, lest his firmness, unaided, should give way beneath the storms of ungovernable passion. He would make it a duty to forget her; he would marry some one else—some one whom he would not be tempted to love too well—the one of whose society would not absorb him, who would not entangle him in the blinding web of fascination to whom, irrevocably bound, he should be compelled, by every highest principle, to cleave. Leaving all other—so long as they both should live—then to think of Gabrielle would be sin; sin, sin so positive, so gross, he was surely in danger of stooping. To mere weakness, he had already stooped, and might so stoop

again, three months before, at the May school, when he sat on the village green with Gabrielle and watched the children play, the possibility of which was now come upon him—the possibility that he might one day fall in love—had entered his mind. He had not known why it occurred; but thus it had been; and then, when he had determined that his best defence would be to raise an impassable barrier between himself and the enemy, in the form of marriage—no, not with the person whom he loved, but with a person whom he did not love. He had considered the advisability of taking this step beforehand—of anticipating the attack by saying while yet, as he believed, his heart was free. And he had thought of Theodosia Featherstone as, in such a case, a suitable wife.

Theodosia was not romantic; she would not expect him any too romantic devotion; she would not, much less break her heart, if he were careless. She wanted only money and a position; and these he could bestow. She looked well at the head of his table; she entertained his visitors; she would be a good and practical mistress of his household. He saw that she was quite at his disposal. And, indeed, he had suspected an obstacle

in the person of Lord Joseph Postlethwaite. But he had recently met both Lord Joseph and Theodosia in London, and he now felt convinced that his suspicions on this score had been groundless.

So again, as on that May afternoon, he thought of Theodosia Featherstone.

She was expected to arrive at Farnley the following day. He would at once begin to pay her particular attention. As soon as possible he would engage himself; then, pledged in honor, he should feel safe. But how had he fallen from his former height, since external bonds like these were requisite to enforce the once all-potent bonds of his own will!

And Gabrielle? What would she think of all this? For one moment he faltered. But only for one moment. She could not love him—yet, he would not pause to examine this assertion; Charles Godfrey was doing his best to win her heart, and soon, doubtless, he would succeed. Perhaps, indeed, he had succeeded already. He should come to Farnley; he should have every opportunity. Yes—down, wild demon! he should. Not one finger would James stir to hinder it.

His resolutions were complete; to be carried out at all hazards. A thrill of stern triumph shot through James's heart as he thought how fiercely would he be avenged on themselves his weakness and his blindness. And yet—he was surely exhausted no less in mind than in body, or he could not, even in solitude, so lose his self-control—yet, in that very moment, his head sank on his hands, and heavy sobs convulsed his whole frame. Who would recognize the imperturbable James Gordon now?

The outburst refreshed him. Ere long he raised his head, dashed away, in indignation, the unmanly tears, pushed the dark mass of hair from his fevered forehead, and rested. The summer dawn was breaking in the east. The birds had begun to twitter, and the cows to low. For the present the storm was over, succeeded by a stagnant calm: he could not think or reason any more. He rose, returned to the house—entering as he had gone, through the chapel; wearily mounted the stairs, and took refuge in his own room. There, throwing himself upon the bed, a few brief moments saw him lost in a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"She dreams on him, that has forgot her love;
You dote on her that cares not for your love,
'Tis pity, love should be so contrary!"

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

"GABRIELLE," said Charlie Godfrey, "I hardly like to ask, but you used to tell me every thing, and— Is it true that you are engaged to Mr. Gordon?"

"Is it true, Charlie? What can you mean?" cried Gabrielle, instantly crimson.

"Never mind. Don't answer me unless you wish. Only it did seem a little queer when I heard the report, that you should be engaged and say nothing to me."

"Heard the report, Charlie? What report? It is entirely false, at any rate. I am not engaged—or likely to be engaged. You have been to see Mr. Morris. Was it he who—"

"He said nothing that you need mind. At least, he merely said that he had been told you were engaged to Mr. Gordon. Such things will get about, you know. Why, Gabrielle—!"

For she had burst into a passion of tears.

"Oh, Charlie! what shall I do? What will James think? I can't bear even the idea of his hearing it! What shall I do, Charlie?"

"You can do nothing, my dear Gabrielle. The probability is that Gordon will not hear it; if he should, he would pay it no attention. It is the kind of thing that would go in at one ear and out at the other with him."

But Gabrielle sobbed on.

"I wish I'd held my tongue!" said Charlie, sighing. "How is it that you take things so to heart, Gabrielle? How will you ever get through the world?"

"I can't help it, Charlie. I shouldn't care if it were any one else. But James—!"

There was no mistaking the tone in which that "But James—" was uttered. Charlie looked blankly away, out of the window, seeing nothing.

"Charlie," she said, raising her eyes, at length, "if you hear such a report again, do contradict it. Say that it is not true, and say so very positively. Will you promise?"

"Yes, I will promise."

He took her hand as though she had been a child who required to be soothed.

"And I'll tell you what: I'll go over and get Mr. Morris to quash the report altogether. I dare say he can. But don't cry any more. I feel wretched when I see you cry."

"Never mind, dear Charlie. It is only my silliness," said Gabrielle, and submitted herself to the soothing; thinking how happy she was to possess a friend so good and so kind, and to be on such pleasant terms with him—that tiresome love, *par excellence*, out of the question.

But Charlie, meanwhile, was sick at heart. He could hardly remember a time when he had not, as a matter of course, looked forward to spending his life with Gabrielle; when he had not regarded her as his own especial property: his wife in prospective. She had filled to him the place of sister, friend, mother; she had been, she was now, by far the most precious thing in his world; and until very recently the poor fellow had never doubted but that he was the most precious thing in hers.

During the last few days, however, his own observations had convinced him of his mistake. Not that he perfectly comprehended the position of affairs; but he saw that, already, James Gordon was to Gabrielle something that he had never been to her—even at Eversfield. It was a terrible blow. Charlie, at first, was almost stunned by it. He walked about, feeling as though he were in a dream; a dream of horror and of darkness: and longed to awake. But, by this time, he had so far recollected himself as to determine that, come what might upon him, he must face it like a man; that he must "be up and doing," with a heart for any fate; and, so far as possible, supply the part of a brother to Gabrielle.

Some such guard, she, so sensitive, so unsophisticated, required; he was by no means sure that young Gordon had not been playing fast and loose with her. He would at least watch over her; he would at least let her know that, whoever else might fail her, she had a friend in him.

And this resolution formed, peace, if no more, revived. He felt himself strong to suffer.

The day on which Gabrielle returned to Farnley, was still and sultry. The air was full of droning insects: the sky of heat-clouds. The carriage—not the pony-carriage, this time—was sent to fetch her; and she had a solitary drive. As she entered the park-gates, something started, suddenly, from beneath a tree, something very fresh and cool and pretty, in a fluttering muslin dress and a shady hat. It signed to the coachman to stop; then danced to the carriage-door.

"Gabrielle!" with a sweeping courtesy—"your humble servant!"

"Oh, Cissy! I am so glad to see you. Do get in, and drive with me to the house."

"No, that won't suit me at all at all. You must get out, and walk with me away from the house. I know a place where we can hide; I'm so sick of the people. Such swarms! and the gentlemen are out shooting, and there's only womankind at home. They've got Olivia with them, and Marian, and Annie too; and they don't want us a bit. Come along."

She opened the door, and made a feint of dragging Gabrielle forth. Whereupon Gabrielle jumped forth; and the coachman was ordered to drive on. Cissy drew her cousin's arm within her own; and led her away, under the trees.

"Here, behind this bush, is my hiding-place. We'll sit down, and be cosy. And now let me relieve my mind by describing these tiresome people. First, there's Mrs. Featherstone, with her sharp little eyes. I advise you to keep clear of them, Gabrielle. I'm a nether millstone; she may slander me all day, and I shall be just as happy. But you're made of different stuff."

"Yes, I remember those eyes. They frightened me directly I saw them."

"My dear Gabrielle, fear nothing and nobody. Brass is the coin for this world. Though, if you must be a coward, there's a further object of terror!

'I know a maiden'—(she's at Farnley now)—'fair to see;

Beware!

She can both false and friendly be—

Take care!

Her surname's Featherstone, and her Christian name's The—
So there!"

I hope you appreciate my poetic talent, Gabrielle. But, seriously, never strike up a friendship with that most unpleasant little article, or you'll repent it. Not, indeed, that you'll have the opportunity! James is her friend in this family, and she's very faithful to him: sticks like a leech—('Poetical again! Pardon my flights.) They flirt sweetly, 'from morn to dewy eve.' I say this, that you may be prepared to see James make himself ridiculous, which you inevitably will see, to-night. But it's one thing to flirt, and another to woo; high diddle diddle; boo, boo, boo. I really can't help hisping in numbers—the numbers come so!—Gypsy, sit still, dear, while I fix your daisy chain—as Ellen Montgomery would say."

"What other people are there, Cissy?"

"Why, there's Captain Featherstone and his bride: *alias*, Cupid and Mammon. There's Miss Brown, a spinster authoress—a something between indigo and ultramarine. There's—"

"Hush, Cissy! I'll hear no more," said Ga-

brielle, laughing; "you are a naughty, satirical girl; and we mustn't break the ninth commandment: so be quiet."

"Well, dear, I bow to your scruples. As for me, you know, I haven't any. You'd better accept that, at once, as a fact; or I shall shock you continually. By-the-by, Marian's wedding is fixed for October. She means to go with the admiral to the Mediterranean."

"How you will miss her!"

"I suppose I shall. I'm not sure, though, now that I have you. Don't give me up, Gabrielle; but I'm sadly wanting in natural affection. I've got no soul, and, in consequence, no heart."

"Cissy!"

"Not a morsel, dear; and I'm glad. Hearts are mischief-making things—at the root of all the misery in the world."

"And all that misery, sooner than be without a heart, I would bear," cried Gabrielle.

"Ah! because people always admire what they happen to possess themselves. But I, who am an impartial looker-on, can see the rights of the case. Why, you, for instance, if you had a disappointment, you are just one of the sort to say nothing and die of 'a waste,' like that wretched Mary Jones, who was buried this morning."

"What disappointment had Mary Jones?"

"None that I know. But she died of a 'waste.' I saw her last week. Ugh! So thin and ghastly!"

Cissy shuddered.

"And many a girl has looked so, and died so, just through having a heart! Far better be like The Featherstone and me!"

"But very few people really die of a 'broken heart.'"

"No; they have to 'grin and bear it;' that's even worse. But we'll talk of such things no more. 'Live while you live,' the epicure would say. In my opinion, that epicure was a person to be encouraged."

Gabrielle was silent. She sat looking into the far distance. After a pause, during which Cissy had become absorbed in a second daisy-chain—

"I think," she said, "that if this life were all, and this world all, we might, perhaps, be better off without hearts, or with smaller ones. But, as it is, they are very useful."

"That's rather a new view to take of the matter. Please explain yourself, Miss Utilitarian."

"I was thinking of something Mr. Morris once said: that this world is only a school."

"Well?"

"Well, we want sorrow to make us realize that; and sorrow comes through the heart, you know."

"My dear, sorrow is an anomaly. It has crept into the universe by mistake, and it ought to creep out again. You are touching on subjects which I feel myself in duty bound to avoid. I never, when I can help it, remember that I must die, or suffer, or any thing unpleasant of the kind. And as to realizing that this world is a school, let us, and welcome: a Dotheboys Hall, if you like. But will realizing it mend it?"

"It will teach us to think of the world to come as our home," said Gabrielle, with a sigh, caused, perhaps, by some secret foreboding.

Cissy laughed, and threw her daisy-chain over her cousin's head.

"There, look at that, and leave your metaphysics alone. I'm not in a mood for them. Gabrielle, what a cough! Has the waste begun already?"

"I hope not," said Gabrielle, laughing; "we were out in a shower yesterday evening, and I caught cold."

"Well, I hope nothing worse may follow. There's a shot! If I might only go out shooting! I asked James to let me, but he wouldn't."

"Is James a good shot?"

"I sha'n't tell you. I hate to say any thing in his praise; he's always so dreadfully successful. Gabrielle, promise, for my sake, to refuse him, if he should give you a chance."

"You had better make that request to Miss Featherstone," replied Gabrielle. But her heart sickened as she spoke.

Miss Featherstone herself, lovely as ever, was standing with Marian on the steps, when, an hour later, Cissy and Gabrielle came within sight of the hall-door. The gentlemen were just returned, and James, looking peculiarly handsome in his shooting-coat and knickerbockers, a bag of grouse slung across his shoulders, and a gun in his hand, stood at the foot of the steps, answering questions, and flirting—or appearances deceived—with The.

"Oh, Mr. Gordon! do keep your gun still. I'm sure it will go off and shoot me."

"And I am sure that—even were it, which it isn't, loaded—my gun would never do so."

"Oh, of course. Your gun is perfect, be others what they may. Here comes Cissy; and who is with her? Miss Wynn?"

"Yes, Gabrielle. I thought she was at Lorton," said Marian gently.

James, who had been standing with his back

to the park, looked round. A change passed over his face—a momentary quiver. He saw her slowly approaching, by Cissy's side, and felt that every thing he most valued in existence—save his ambition—was centred in that girlish form.

"If she were my wife," he said in his heart, "I should make her my all in all. How could I help it? No woman must ever be that."

"How do you do, Gabrielle?" He took her hand, and, with one cool clasp, relinquished it. "When did you return?"

Gabrielle answered shortly; and passed on. Her sensitive ear had at once discerned the difference of his tone and manner. Leaving Cissy to tease him and provoke The, she went into the house.

He turned again to Miss Featherstone; but, somehow, he could not resume his former lightness. One or two vain attempts he made; then gave it up: and departed with his gun.

The influx of visitors had wrought a marvelous change in Farnley. Voices and footsteps resounded through the silent corridors; strange servants were encountered on the stairs; strange faces in the hall. It was seldom that Gabrielle devoted an unnecessary minute to her glass; but, on this evening, she did linger some time after her toilet was completed, looking wistfully at herself, and thinking of Miss Featherstone: how very beautiful Miss Featherstone was, how natural it seemed that she should captivate James, that he should love her as only beautiful women—so, just then, Gabrielle's morbid imagination whispered—could expect to be loved. If only *she* were beautiful—or even pretty! For Gabrielle's estimate of her own looks was humble in the extreme. And yet an impartial observer would have said that she had little need to complain; that, in some eyes, she was even more attractive, if less striking, than the Bijou herself. She wore white tulle to-night—soft and flowing; with a black sash, jet ornaments, and jasmine in her hair. It was a becoming dress; and then her complexion was so fair, her figure was so slight, and—best of all—her face was so true, so pure, so good! Moreover, that indefinable grace of movement and of manner, which many struggle to acquire by art, but which Gabrielle possessed by nature, was in itself a beauty; and a beauty that could not pall. She did not, however—to murder a quotation—"see herself" as others saw her." She turned from the mirror with a sigh.

"After all, how silly and vain I am," she

thought, "to care so much about my looks! And of course a plain girl may be as useful as a pretty one. Only—"

She smothered a second sigh; and ran downstairs. The saloon, a beautiful room, extending half the length of the house, was now, for the first time since her arrival at Farnley, thrown open, and used in the evening. Gabrielle had never before seen any room half so splendid. The ceiling carved, gilded, and painted; the walls panelled with frescoes from Munich and from Rome; the tables rich in beautiful books and knick-knacks; an imposing row of windows, each divided from its neighbor by a curtained recess, containing a marble statue or bust: the whole ending in a vista of conservatory, where a variety of the most exquisite shrubs and flowers, English and exotic, were collected. In Gabrielle's unsophisticated eyes, no ornament, no luxury, was wanting. And the people, she thought, suited the place. At first sight, there appeared to be quite a galaxy of beautiful ladies! A nearer inspection proved that, as a rule, these ladies were not beautiful: the majority, indeed, bereft of maids and gay attire, would probably have been plain. But, at present, they made a goodly show; and the gentlemen hovered about them; chatting, paying compliments, doing all that gentlemen are expected to do on such occasions. Gabrielle, somewhat in the shade, looked from group to group, and made her mental comments. On a sofa, close by, sat her cousin Annie, Lady Peers: with another young matron. They were evidently comparing notes upon some deeply interesting topic. Gabrielle caught a few words.

"No; Flossy got through them very well. Dr. Williams thought—"

"Indeed? Johnny was quite covered with the rash, and—"

"Yes; Flossy's A, B, C, is a great trial. What do you think of—?"

"Mrs. Barbauld's hymns are the thing. Johnny says—"

Etc., etc., etc. Gabrielle turned elsewhere. Her motherly time was to come.

There, in the distance, is Olivia: showing photographs to two shy young ladies. Dear, good Olivia! always occupied for others. Cissy is the centre of a circle of gentlemen: which circle and which centre are at present receiving very close attention from Mrs. Featherstone's sharp little eyes. Cissy, seeing this, rattles wildly on; thinks of all the most shocking things she can say, and says them; launches satire, right

and left; and otherwise misconducts herself. But her voice and her laughter are always low; and her manner is always refined. However careless Cissy may be, she never forgets that she is a lady.

Who are those, in the corner near the conservatory? The handsome young man who towers above his neighbors' heads—the beautiful little fairy whose robes of blue are rivalled by her eyes? Gabrielle's gaze is riveted on this couple; she cannot look away. They are absorbed in conversation: he standing, leaning against the wall; she seated, sometimes glancing up at him, sometimes bending, as in pretty confusion, over her fan. His cheek is slightly flushed; his eyes shine. "How happy she must be!" thinks Gabrielle.

The gong sounds; the people rise; there is a flutter and a dispersion. They pair off. A fashionable-looking young man, with a black mustache and a small head, approaches Gabrielle, bows, and offers his arm. She lays the tip of her white glove upon his very fashionable sleeve, and they follow in the train. On the threshold, he remarks that the weather is sultry. She agrees; her thoughts far on before—where James, with a corpulent countess, heads the procession.

They reach the dining-room; the table is a glitter of glass and plate, with flowers, beautifully arranged. James is already in his place; and the corpulent countess has subsided into a chair at his right hand. A distant voice says something which is supposed to be grace; everybody sits down; the servants rush to and fro; the room resounds with the inquiry, "White soup, or mullagatawny?" The fashionable young man begins to talk about music. How does Gabrielle like Sims Reeves? He is exceedingly astonished to find that she has never heard Sims Reeves. She wishes the fashionable young man would hold his tongue. James, with a smile, is bending forward to make some observation to Miss Featherstone; and Gabrielle wants to catch it. Instead, she catches his eye, and feels herself blush. She exerts herself, tries to talk and laugh; he shall not see that she is out of spirits. The fashionable young man is evidently charmed. She catches James's eye again; he looks a little pained. She wonders why, but does not stop to consider.

The fashionable young man continues to converse. He speaks slowly, and he minces his words. Neither are the words themselves remarkably worth hearing; but Gabrielle takes

pains to keep up the conversation. It is joined in by her other neighbor; he is sensible and well-informed, and adds to it fresh zest. In the intervals, she looks up at grim Gordons of old, who survey her from the walls. She wonders whether that cavalier, with ringlets and a sword, ever sat where James is sitting, and admired some Miss Featherstone of his day; whether that lady with a pyramid of powdered hair ever endured what she is enduring now—ever struggled through this restlessness of jealousy—hating, yet powerless to subdue it. Well! if it were so, what matter? It had long been over. Their love, and their jealousy, and their hatred—all were gone. "One generation goeth, and another cometh." Gabrielle glances round the table, sees gayety, beauty, fine dresses, smiling faces, and feels that all is a dream. That all life is a dream; she, and those about her, "such stuff as dreams are made of."

At length Olivia rises. James opens the door. Gabrielle does not look at him; Miss Featherstone does; and makes some gay remark, which he answers in a similar tone. Cissy shakes her fist at him, and frowns. Cissy is exceedingly angry with James, just now. In the drawing-room, Olivia introduces Gabrielle to the shy young ladies. They are the daughters of a "poor parson," James's distant cousin. Shy indeed they are, innocent of "manner," painfully conscious and ill at ease. Gabrielle, ever quick in sympathy, is sorry for them, speaks to them pleasantly. Olivia passes on; and they are left in her sole charge.

She draws them out; not by direct endeavor, but by the interest with which she listens to their timid remarks. They become quite confidential; confess that they are home-sick, that they can't help thinking of mamma, left to cope alone with the mending-basket; wish they could fly over, just to kiss the children, and tuck them up in their beds. Olivia, from the other end of the room, wonders what magic can have converted the half *gauche* reserve into that eager brightness! Cissy wonders too: at Gabrielle's patience. Miss Featherstone, dying of *ennui*, as is usual with her in the absence of gentlemen—believes that Gabrielle has grouped herself and her companions for the special edification of those all-conquering heroes, when they arrive.

Meanwhile, unconscious of observers, Gabrielle feels happier than she has felt since she quitted Lorton. The girls are talking of their eldest brother. So good, and so hard-working! He is *just married*, you know. It was considered foolish,

Jessie, the eldest, believed; but it did not seem foolish to them. She was an orphan; so pretty—oh, lovely! almost as lovely as that young lady there—indicating The. She would have been obliged to go out as a governess, when her father died; but Robert could not bear the idea: so they married at once. Robert said that if they were faithful to one another, and worked hard, God would take care of them. Robert was in a London bank; very clever: everybody said that he would get on. After all, poor people may be just as happy, and just as refined, as rich ones—does not Miss Wynn think so? Yes, Miss Wynn does think so. Anxiety, of course, they must expect; but where is there not anxiety?

The door opens. An influx of gentlemen: one, in Gabrielle's eyes preëminent. Suppose *he* were a clerk in a bank, and his wife obliged to pinch, and save, and economize; would she not, nevertheless, be the happiest woman in the world? "Oh, yes!" Gabrielle exclaims aloud; then, as the girls stare in surprise, turns it off by some irrelevant observation. Suddenly they become shy again, and shrink into themselves. Gabrielle's sensible neighbor of the dinner-table is steering toward her. Without ceremony, he sits down at her side; and resumes his conversation. Presently approaches also the fashionable young man, with another of the same species; whom he has informed that a confounded pleasant girl is over there—better come and make her acquaintance. Once more, Gabrielle catches James's eye. He looks as though he wondered whether she feels his neglect, whether she thinks that he might come and speak to her, if only a few words—if only to ask a trivial question or two, about her visit, and so forth. Perhaps he imagines that she is jealous. She again exerts herself; summons all her self-control; and maintains her "confounded pleasant" character. Words come freely; ideas flow; she is amazed at her own powers. The shy girls listen, envy her ease, her freedom from self-consciousness. By degrees, and without knowing it, she becomes the centre of a choice little *coterie*. Some of the most agreeable people present—both ladies and gentlemen—are attracted in passing; pause; and linger.

"Your cousin used to be shy, I thought," observes Miss Featherstone.

"I suppose she has outgrown it," James replies, with perfect impassibility. Miss Featherstone can't make him out, as respects Gabrielle. She quite understands him, however, as respects herself; so dismisses the subject. James feels

certain proud satisfaction in Gabrielle's popularity. Yet his heart aches. He wishes that bedtime were come, and the lights put out, and the people gone. He is sick of them all; sick of the world and of every thing in it.

Olivia asks Gabrielle to sing; Gabrielle trembles, but consents. She follows Olivia, the fashionable young man following her, all down the long room to the piano. Some one gets her portfolio; the fashionable young man holds it, while she chooses a song. She draws off her gloves; the fashionable young man takes them, and prepares to turn over the leaves. She hears her voice, as though it were not her voice, ring through the room. The hum of conversation subsides; every one is listening: among the rest, James—whom she sees standing in the door-way of the conservatory. There is a shadow on his face; as she sings, the shadow deepens: but that she cannot see.

People flock about her. She has made a sensation; is compelled to accept an *encore*: and winds up with a fit of coughing. Olivia whispers that she is a naughty child, has caught cold, and must have a dose. Others succeed to the piano; Gabrielle returns to the shy girls, who welcome her gladly. The fashionable young man still hangs about her. Before his mind flashes a wild vision of marriage on eight hundred pounds a year; he feels, however, that he is not formed for love in a cottage. He likes her uncommonly, he says to himself: but crushes the vision.

The long evening drags to an end. Gabrielle and the shy girls rise together. James determines that he may, at any rate, wish her good-night; and makes toward her for the purpose: but, before he can reach her, she is gone. He stops short, and wishes that he had been quicker, or that the morning were come: at present, every thing is a blank. The girls, in excess of gratitude, kiss Gabrielle, as she leaves them at the head of the stairs. In her own room, Cissy is waiting; and bounds to meet her.

"Gabrielle! Gabrielle! See the conquering heroine! If you meant it, how jealous I should be!"

"Meant what, Cissy?"

"Your exertions have worn you out, my dear; you look tired to death. I mustn't stay to talk. Never mind, darling—" with a sudden embrace—"brave it out, and every thing will come right."

She has vanished before Gabrielle can reply.

Enter Olivia's maid bearing a waiter, thereon a measure-glass, containing a decoction of camphor and ipecacuanha, duly proportioned, also a dozeuge, to be taken after the same. Gabrielle,

albeit reluctant, swallows both. Any thing for peace; any thing to be left alone.

Well! at length she was alone, and able to cry out her cry undisturbed. And she cried till the dawn was breaking, and the tears, from utter exhaustion, gave place to a state that was less sleep than insensibility, less rest than a respite.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"Were there ever any
Writhed not at passed joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numb'd sense to steal it—
Was never said in rhyme!"

JOHN KEATS.

THE servants whispered that master was courting Miss Featherstone, and without doubt the servants were right. No guest at Farnley could ever complain that he, much less she, was neglected; James showed himself as expert in the rôle of host as in every other rôle with which he had to do, but it soon began to be understood that the cream of his attentions belonged to The. Were a chair left vacant near The in an evening, it was shortly filled by James. Were she summoned to the piano, James stood at her elbow, turned over her leaves, picked up her handkerchief. Were a starlight promenade proposed, it was James who placed her cloak on her shoulders—James who paced beside her, talking in low, starlight-fitting tones. The felt herself exalted to the seventh heaven. Her name was universally coupled with his. Her co-visitors so coupled it. Letters flew daily on the wings of steam to all parts of the United Kingdom, and to some of other kingdoms, so coupling it. Mr. Gordon himself, and apparently Olivia—although, indeed, for Olivia's opinion, The cared little—were content that it should be so coupled. And Mr. Gordon was one of the richest commoners, Farnley was one of the finest estates, and the family was one of the oldest and best in England. If in literary matters, moreover, he went on as he had begun, his reputation—all the first critics agreed—would be world-wide. And this clever, distinguished man, this lion, was her slave. She had enthralled him; she, Theodosia Featherstone.

So things went smoothly with The just now. She could afford to laugh at Cissy's cutting speeches, which were dealt forth in no mean measure at every opportunity. She could afford to despise Gabrielle, as equally beneath notice

and anxiety. She could afford to abstain from other flirtations. Only one cloud, one tiny cloud, darkened her thoughts of the future. For the present its shadow was confined to her own breast. Long might it continue so!—and quickly, ere it interposed, might she consummate her conquest!

Visitors came and went, but The stayed. Mrs. Featherstone departed into Scotland, but The was left. Good, unselfish Olivia saw what was passing, and who could have numbered the pangs which in these days she endured? They were endured, however, in silence. No regrets of hers should mar her idol's happiness.

What puzzled poor Gabrielle in the matter was not the circumstance of James's defection to The; this appeared only too natural!—but the other concomitant circumstance, that he avoided herself. That his interest in her and her pursuits seemed suddenly to have perished; that he scarcely ever so much as spoke to her of his own free choice; that, when obliged to do so, his voice was so cold, his manner so indifferent. In short, that he appeared entirely changed, not to others, not in himself, but to her.

Vainly she strove to understand it, recapitulating in her mind every event of the fortnight which had preceded her visit to Lorton. Sometimes she fancied that she had offended him. Sometimes she wondered whether he had heard, and wished to annihilate, the report mentioned by Charlie. Sometimes, again, a wild ray of hope suggested *pique* on Charlie's account as sufficient cause for all. She could have borne his behavior to The, she told herself, so much better if only he were still kind, genial, cousinly, as in the early days when the ice between them was broken! But she did not know her own heart. As things now were, utter coldness was better than kindness such as this.

She was silent and patient; she tried to be brave, but unawares she drooped. The old wan look returned, her cough lingered, although the weather was warm and fine. The constant struggle to seem what she was not was so wearing—both to mind and body. How hard, when her heart was aching as it had never ached before; when the craving for a smile, a look, a pleasant word—yes, and for more—seemed to be consuming her life; when only by a continual strain could the impatient tears be stayed—how hard, under these circumstances, she found it to mingle with the guests, to laugh and talk and sing, to maintain an ever-cheerful countenance, an ever-ready smile; those alone who have been tried in

a similar manner can estimate. But she succeeded. At this time she acquired a certain dignity, a self-possession, which became her well, and which, notwithstanding her popularity, her attractiveness to gentlemen, prevented almost entirely ill-natured remarks, prevented also any too obtrusive attentions. No one who saw the gentle, graceful girl, merely as she appeared in common society, would have imagined what passionate depths, what capacities for rejoicing and for suffering lay beneath that serene exterior.

Olivia observed her delicate looks; and set them down to late hours, excitement, and the heat. That Gabrielle was happy, perfectly happy, Olivia never doubted. Cissy alone understood; and, at present, Cissy's existence was passed in a perpetual wrath with regard to James, a perpetual viciousness with regard to The, and, with regard to Gabrielle, a perpetual solicitude—half pitiful, half tender.

One afternoon, the two girls, having escaped the respective wiles of a croquet-party, a boating-party, and an archery-party, were sitting together in the park. They had with them "Fouqué's Seasons;" and Gabrielle was trying to make Cissy recognize in Undine the likeness to herself. But Cissy was in one of her maddest moods; and could not, if she would, be serious. The reading was therefore after this fashion: a sentence from Gabrielle, and an absurd comment from Cissy; another sentence, and another comment: and so *ad infinitum*.

"I think," said Gabrielle, closing the book at length, "we'll put it off till you are sober."

"Thanks, dear; I never knew, till this moment, that insobriety was among my vices. But now that you've set it before me, I'll see about taking the pledge. Gabrielle! we were discussing faces, yesterday; and our opinions differed. Now there—coming in our direction, too—is a face which I do like; kind, honest, every thing nice. Can't you see, stupid child? Not floating in the atmosphere—but fastened to that young man."

"Why, it is Charlie!" cried Gabrielle, starting to her feet. "He said he would come soon."

"Oh! so there is the far-famed Charlie," mused Cissy, sitting composedly in her snug nook under the bush, and watching the greeting. "Why can't people have sense, I wonder? That face is worth ten of James's."

"Come and be introduced to Cissy," Gabrielle meanwhile was saying. He was already prejudiced in Cissy's favor; and very pretty and charming he thought her; as, rising, she bestowed on

him a little *piquante* bow—like the majority of Cissy's movements, peculiarly her own.

"Did you walk, Charlie?" asked Gabrielle.

"No, I rode. I have left my horse at Mr. Morris's."

"And I suppose," said Cissy, "you spied us from Mr. Morris's garden?"

"Yes; I could not be quite sure, you know; but I thought I recognized Gabrielle's figure."

"What? both together, taken for Gabrielle's figure? Poor Gabrielle!" murmured Cissy, under her breath. "Will you let us escort you to the house, Mr. Godfrey?" she said aloud. "My brother is out, I fear; but we shall find my sister Olivia, and a few other ladies."

Then Cissy, who could, upon occasion, be very demure, picked up "*Fouqué's Seasons*," called Gypsy, and they proceeded to the house.

"You have not lost your cough," said Charlie, eying Gabrielle somewhat anxiously.

"My dear Charlie! what an ominous tone of voice!" she exclaimed, laughing. But to him, who knew her so well, the laugh had an unnatural sound.

Again he looked at her anxiously; stifling a sigh. Neither sigh nor look was lost on Cissy's sharp eyes.

"We have been reading '*Undine*,' Mr. Godfrey," she said, to divert his thoughts.

"'*Undine*?' Gabrielle, do you remember reading it with me, those Easter holidays?"

"I should think I did! We read '*Verdant Green*,' at the same time; and '*Maud*;' and '*Arnold's Life*.'"

"Rather a heterogeneous company," observed Cissy. "So you read '*Verdant Green*?' By-the-by, Gabrielle, Mr. Bouncer is my favorite character in fiction."

"That's a unique taste for a young lady!" said Charlie, smiling. "My cousin Euphrosyne has set up one of those victimizing books of questions—'What is your favorite quality?' and so forth—the most awful bore! I was dragged through all the twenty-one, yesterday, and I haven't got over it yet. But I was about to observe: the other answers were chiefly written by young ladies; and Guy, in '*The Heir of Redclyffe*,' was almost invariably the favorite hero. Now and then came '*John Halifax*,' or Claude, in '*Ivora*.' But Guy was by far the champion."

"Who is your favorite hero, Charlie?"

"Well—I did put down Mark Tapley," said Charlie, in an apologetic tone; "I'm not quite sure about it, you know. But he is such an awfully jolly fellow—so unselfish and good-natured."

"Yes; delightful!" cried Cissy. "I never cared for Guy. I grieve to state that angels pall on me."

"Guy was not an angel, though; he was a human being," said Gabrielle; "he had plenty of faults; only he conquered them."

"Yes, you must take care what you say about Guy, Miss Gordon, before Gabrielle. By Jove, I shall never forget the state she was in, when first she read that book! You should have seen her eyes, one particular evening. Guy was just dead."

"Now, Charlie, be quiet," said Gabrielle, laughing; "neither you nor Cissy can appreciate Miss Yonge."

"The amount of detail in her books is quite too much for my weak patience," said Cissy.

"But it is just the detail that makes them so useful. They show us how the great principles may be carried out in every-day life."

"James calls them the much-ado-about-nothing library," said Cissy.

"Ah!" Gabrielle answered, softly; "but James often forgets that—"

"Little things,
On little wings,
Bear little souls to heaven."

Her color mantled as she spoke. Cissy darted a sharp glance at Charlie; and, somewhat to her vexation, caught his eye. She instantly looked past him, calling to Gypsy, who was frisking in the grass—much as his mistress would have frisked, had not the rules of propriety restrained her. But somehow, Charlie, from this moment, felt that Cissy was his friend.

Half an hour later, the boating-party, among whom were Miss Featherstone and James, appeared in the croquet-ground. The having decreed that the sun was too hot for boating.

"Oh, Charlie!" were the first words which James heard; "do croquet that horrid blue away, and then come to me—I want your help so much!"

"There, Gabrielle; blue won't trouble us again in a hurry!—Oh! how are you, Mr. Gordon? I did not see you before."

"How are you?" repeated James, and moved away; turned his back on the whole party.

"James, just come here a moment. I want to speak to you."

"Well, Olivia?"

"Can't you ask Mr. Godfrey to dinner, some day? He has seen so little of Gabrielle lately."

James gave an impatient kick to a pebble at his feet, and Olivia caught a mutter which more than resembled, "Confound it!"

"The other day," he said gruffly, after a pause; "the other day, when I met him at Rotherbridge, I told him that he might as well come over for a few nights. I suppose there's no objection?"

"None whatever. What objection could there possibly be? Unless, indeed, you disapprove of him for Gabrielle? In that case, something should be done at once—"

"Oh, confound it!"—an unmistakable "confound it," this time.

Then a change, almost an humble change, of tone.

"I beg your pardon, Olivia. Oh, yes, I approve of him."

And James turned away. Olivia's eyes followed him anxiously. He could not be well. Or had he taken a dislike to Mr. Godfrey? Or perhaps he was fatigued, and therefore irritable? Yes. That was very probable indeed.

Meanwhile James, having retired to a little distance, was looking on at the game. Charlie and Gabrielle stood together, somewhat apart from the rest, he earnestly talking, she listening, with downcast eyes. When called to play she started, moving slowly, as though preoccupied.

"James! are you watching Gabrielle and Mr. Godfrey? Isn't it nice? Or rather aren't you disgusted?—for I know how you despise falling in love, and all such nonsense. To me, a weaker mortal, it is great fun."

"All life seems to be great fun to you, Cissy. You'll feel differently, perhaps, some day."

His tone was half sad, half bitter. Cissy's conscience gave her a prick. But the prick was soon over. He was a naughty, selfish boy, and the more he suffered the better!

"Good-by," she said, with a provoking little courtesy, and skipped away.

"Gabrielle," Charlie was saying, "you don't look well, and—"

"Yes?"

"You don't look happy."

"I wish you wouldn't watch me so," cried Gabrielle, with a touch of petulance.

He looked hurt, and she instantly repented.

"Oh, dear Charlie! I beg your pardon. I didn't mean that, indeed. Sometimes I hardly know what I say, I feel so cross and irritable—so different from what I was at Eversfield. I wish I had never seen this place."

"Why, I thought you—"

"You thought I seemed so happy here? Yes, I was—I am. Never mind, don't trouble yourself about me, Charlie."

Then, as he still earnestly regarded her, she added, her color rising: "There are things which I cannot tell, even to you."

Yes, she spoke truly. Between him and this young heart—all open, once, before him—lay now an unfathomable gulf. Another—in those old familiar days a stranger—might cross that gulf one day; but he never.

"I know, Gabrielle. I hope I should not wish to pry into what you would rather keep to yourself. Only you must remember that I am your—your—brother; and that whenever I can help you, I will. Do you see?"

She looked up into his face with a grateful smile, which almost repaid him as he deserved, for his self-forgetting self-command. And she felt in her heart that a true friend is one of God's best gifts.

When the croquet was over, James approached Charlie, and repeated the invitation of which he had spoken to Olivia. Charlie accepted it, fixing a date; and then departed—much to James's relief.

"I'm a terrible dog in the manger!" he thought, his eyes mechanically fixed upon the retreating figure.

"Gabrielle," said Cissy, tossing her mallet into the air, and catching it with much dexterity; "Gabrielle, that Mr. Godfrey is remarkably fond of you!"

"Yes," said Gabrielle, listlessly; "of course he is."

"Of course? Highty-tighty! And why not you of him, pray?"

"Why, Cissy, I am. I love him with all my heart."

"Just so," said Cissy, catching her mallet for the last time, and throwing it upon the grass. She added nothing further; and Gabrielle thought her even more odd than usual.

Meanwhile, Charlie and Mr. Morris, who had met in the park, were walking slowly, arm in arm, toward the creeper-covered cottage. Very downcast was Charlie's face; more for Gabrielle's sake than his own.

"Miss Wynn out of spirits? Sorry to hear it. Afraid there's a reason," said Mr. Morris. "Poor young things!" he muttered, under his breath. "Generation after generation!"

"What reason do you mean?" inquired Charlie, ignoring the mutter.

"Afraid Gordon's something of a flirt. At any rate, he's behaving strangely. Making up now to Miss Featherstone. Every one says so. Observed it myself."

"No, by Jove! is he?" he exclaimed, with a passionate stamp. Then, his face crimson, wrenching his arm away, he strode on at a furious pace; while poor Mr. Morris panted and puffed behind.

"My dear—Godfrey"—in panting gusts—"be calm.—Wait a minute.—Can't—I—oh!—"

The young man, brought suddenly to his senses, paused; and Mr. Morris puffed—supported by a tree.

"Pray forgive me," began Charlie, full of compunction. Mr. Morris waved his hand.

"Say no more. Say no more. Understand . . . Can go on now . . . We must take men as we find them, my dear Godfrey. He is young; has much to learn. He may be acting from pique. Ah"—a heavy, groaning sigh; "pique has broken many a heart ere now."

"If he breaks Gabrielle's heart, I'll never forgive him."

"Now don't, my dear boy. Ah, don't!" said Mr. Morris, shaking his head. "Be charitable. We're all, every one of us, selfish by nature. And in things of this sort, there are hidden machineries; fancies, jealousies. Certainly he seems to be behaving wrongly; but—"

"Wrongly! If I believed that he were vexing Gabrielle—trifling with her feelings—I'd—nothing would be too bad for him!"

"He can't read her face as you do, remember. Apparently, she is happy. Laughs and talks as usual. Very popular."

"Well! I may be mistaken. I'll wait and see. I have vowed to protect her; and protect her I will," murmured Charlie. He spoke less to Mr. Morris than to himself; but Mr. Morris heard.

"Ah, poor boy!" he said, pityingly; "how can you protect her? These things are not under our control."

"There are means of punishing such rascals, though. I'd call him out—I'd let every one know—I'd—"

"Hush!" said Mr. Morris, raising his hand. Into his manner came a strange, calm dignity, commanding Charlie's attention. "Remember what you are. Is vengeance yours? Is this the spirit in which you would preach, visit, fulfil your ministry?"

The young man felt himself abashed; he made no reply.

"Is vengeance yours?" Mr. Morris repeated: and looked far upward, as though his eyes would pierce the sky. "Was vengeance mine? To know that one dearer than life—" his voice faltered—"has been oppressed, slighted; and to be

still: it is hard—hard. But our duty. Remember that. It was my duty. It is yours. We must wait, believe. All will be right at last. All is over-ruled. And for good."

"Yes, I was wrong," said Charlie, humbly; "I was half mad for the moment. And perhaps, after all, Gabrielle's trouble may be something quite apart from Gordon?"

He looked into Mr. Morris's face, as though seeking, nay imploring, assent.

"Perhaps—" said Mr. Morris, doubtfully; "but if not—" and he laid his hand on Charlie's shoulder—"don't be too much cast down. A little sorrow won't hurt her. Sorrow is God's best teacher. And we have all—yes, the highest of us—much to learn."

Somehow, as Charlie rode back to Lorton, he found himself raised beyond the atmosphere of second causes: and a voice in his heart whispered, that this rugged specimen of humanity, with the furrowed face, and the ill-made clothes, and the uncouth manner, knew more, after all, about the true secret of life, than he: more, perhaps, than any among those whom he had been chiefly accustomed to respect.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Does he love you as of old?"

ALFRED TENNYSON.

At this time, Cissy's existence was not without a spice of romance on her own score. Among the second set of visitors, was one Mr. Trevor, who paid her open and most unmistakable attentions; and Gabrielle, at first, felt at a loss to decide whether Cissy approved of them or no.

He was about thirty years of age; handsome, gentlemanlike, and agreeable; and being an old friend—or at least an old acquaintance—of the family, was thoroughly at home at Farnley. His stay was prolonged far beyond the ten days which, in arriving, he had named; and, throughout it, morning, noon, and night, saw him pursuing Cissy. Pursuing: for generally, Cissy fled—literally fled—before him; from room to room, from house to garden, from garden to house. But then, when almost hopeless, he seemed on the point of retiring from the field, she would alter her tactics; would smile sweetly, receive his pretty speeches, and send him to and fro on her errands. This, till his confidence returned: the signal for her coyness to return likewise.

"Cissy," said Gabrielle, one evening, as, after

leaving the dining-room, they stood together in a window of the saloon; "Cissy, do you know—have you observed, that Mr. Trevor seems—"

"Rather smitten with me?" said Cissy, supplying the gap. "Of course I have. Months and months ago."

Gabrielle stared.

"What great, shocked eyes, my darling! Well! I'll tell you all about it. The rest of them may set me down as a flirt, and welcome: it will give them pleasure, poor dears! But you, perhaps, would prefer to come behind the scenes."

"You are acting on principle, then?"

"Thoroughly," said Cissy, with deep emphasis; "do you remember what I said one day about flirting? that, in my opinion, flirting may often be turned to account, as a very proper means of punishment? Well! I am now punishing Mr. Trevor; and richly he deserves it."

"Why! what has he done?" said Gabrielle, astonished.

Cissy's color rose; her eyes sparkled.

"Nothing can be too bad for him!" she cried, clinching her fist. "He jilted a girl, last year, Gabrielle: coolly and deliberately jilted her; after winning her affections—which are by no means susceptible—professing to love her as she loved him—and all the rest of it. The wedding-day was on the point of being fixed; when he—he—well, I need not mince matters, to you. He saw me, the first time for three years; and . . . you may guess the sequel. If he chooses to be Crosbie, he must, I suppose. But I won't be Lady Alexandrina."

She paused, and a long silence ensued: Cissy musing over her indignation, Gabrielle undecided as to whether she might admire, or whether she ought to condemn. Finally, a third feeling overpowered her.

"It is a miserable world," she said.

"Fudge! A bad world," cried the furious Cissy. "If you only knew Lucy Ward, Gabrielle! She is a perfect jewel of a girl: ten thousand times nicer than any other girl whom I ever knew—till I knew you. And now, her life is spoiled; and all through him! Why was he so weak and so ill-governed? If he did not know his own mind, it was better that he should not engage himself. However, he has been heartless to her; and I'll be heartless to him."

"But—forgive me, Cissy—do you think that it is your province to take up her cudgels?"

"No; I don't think about it: except to be thankful that my conscience is tougher than yours! And whether it be my province, or the

Pope's, or Punch and Judy's, or anybody's, I mean to do it. 'So say no more, Gabrielle. I sha'n't listen.'"

And Cissy stopped her ears.

Gabrielle understood her sufficiently well to know that expostulation would be useless. The subject was, therefore, by mutual consent, tabooed between them; Cissy silently executing her own plans, and Gabrielle, in equal silence, watching their progress: half pitying Mr. Trevor, half seconding her cousin, and withal, considerably amused.

Cissy, at this time, was an unspeakable comfort to Gabrielle. Over and over again, when she was on the point of giving way, and of betraying her misery by a burst of irrepressible tears, Cissy, discerning the case from afar, would hasten to her side, and draw her out of the room, forbidding the rest to follow. Such conduct, in any one but Cissy, would have been considered singular; but nobody who knew Cissy, and Cissy's caprices, ever wondered at what Cissy chose to do. Alone with her, Gabrielle felt herself free from constraint. She might cry; and Cissy would only caress her, asking no questions, making no remarks. She might sit grave and silent; and Cissy would take it as a matter of course. Between them had arisen a secret understanding that Cissy knew all about every thing; that, although she said little, she saw much; and this, in itself, was a consolation. Words, in Gabrielle's present state, would only have caused her to shrink more morbidly into herself; but silence, such eloquent silence as Cissy's, fell on her heart like balm.

In these days—outwardly and inwardly so sultry and so dry—she knew no greater refreshment than to return, in spirit, to Eversfield; to retrace that past which, as it grew in distance, grew also in sweetness and in brightness. She would walk again with her mother, through the familiar lanes; she would teach again in the old Sunday-school—would gaze on the old views, repeat the old conversations. She would recall the time when, even in her dreams, she had pictured no fuller love than that of parent and of child; when, next to this, had ranked her affection for Charlie; when Charlie was her *beau-ideal* of a young man; when he and she had gone nutting, blackberrying, cowslip-gathering together, with almost childish delight. She would sleep once more in her own little bed, her face turned toward the old gray church: she would wake once more in the early mornings, and lie listening to the cawings in the rookery hard by.

Thus, at length, the intervening life, with its changes, would pass into a dream: until, suddenly, the gong, that grand, mansion-like gong, would sound: or the rustle of dresses—dresses such as Eversfield had never seen—would presage an invasion of her solitude; or a voice, that voice which she never heard without a thrill unknown in those early days, caused her to start, and color, and awaken: to find the dream too real.

She was occasionally somewhat distressed by perceiving herself the object of a close and constant scrutiny on the part of Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris had *carte blanche* to present himself at the park, whenever he so pleased. Generally he did not so please; preferring his own study, his meditations, and his Ten Tribes. But, just now, he had taken it into his head to appear at all hours, in or about the house; and to mingle with the guests. And continually, sitting alone in a dusky corner; or standing, a shabby spot in a gay circle; or so conversing with any one near him, to convey the idea that he was, if not a positive lunatic, "deficient." Mr. Morris was watching Gabrielle.

She could not imagine why. The circumstance puzzled her, when she considered it, almost as much as did the change in James. But one thing was certain: she must, in consequence, maintain a double guard. Thus, in Mr. Morris's presence, her laugh was more ringing, her voice was more frequently heard, than at any other time. The result was, that she overshot her mark: and Mr. Morris became assured of a fact which he had hitherto suspected merely: that Gabrielle was unhappy. Further, that she was ill.

His heart bled both for her and for Charlie: Charlie, whom he regarded as his son in the spirit; whom he felt even tremblingly desirous to protect, and counsel, and assist. Strong though his will might be, however, his resources were few and weak. But one thing lay within his power; and that one thing he did. Night after night, at this period, "when all the world was still," he, kneeling in his study, poured forth his solitary prayers: which, soaring far beyond the stars, bore Gabrielle's name, and Charlie's name, and sometimes, also, James's name, to the throne of the Most High.

It was now the second week in September, and the autumnal tints had begun to glorify the woods. The first month of Gabrielle's trial was over. Some of us thrive, physically, no less in sorrow than in joy; with others, body and mind droop or flourish together; among such was Gabrielle. This month had wrought in her a per-

ceptible change. Her strength, none too great at any time, had of late been steadily diminishing; she did not lose her cough, although the weather was warm and bright; and there was a feverishness, a shortness of breath, a general lassitude, about her, which alarmed Olivia. She put her young cousin under a course of tonics; and decided that if, after a week's nursing, she were not considerably better, she must see the doctor.

Nothing loath was Gabrielle to sink into the *dolce far niente* of an invalid. She had long felt weak and tired; and she submitted, very contentedly, to be installed in an arm-chair in the school-room, with a book on her lap, a bunch of grapes at her side, and Cissy for her companion.

"Shall I disturb you, dear, if I try these songs? They have just come, and I am dying to know what they are."

"Oh, yes; do try them, Cissy. I should like to hear them so much."

"And you won't mistake me for a peacock, and fancy it's going to rain? This looks pretty—'Rock me to sleep, Mother.'"

Seating herself at the piano, she began forthwith, not pausing to scrutinize the words. And Gabrielle listened, thinking not of the young unknown mother, who had lain nineteen years in her grave, but of him who had been to her father and mother in one, and to whom, throughout this miserable month, her heart had turned with an intensity of longing sharper than any that she had felt since his death.

"Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight;
Make me a child again, just for to-night!
Mother, come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore.

Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,
Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep.

Mother, dear mother! the years have been long
Since I last hushed to your lullaby song;
Yet with strong yearning and passionate pain,
Long I to-night for your presence again.

Over my heart, in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever has shone;
No other worship abides and endures—
Faithful, unselfish, and patient, like yours.

Sick of the hollow, the base, the untrue,
Mother, dear mother, my heart calls for you:
Never hereafter to wake or to weep,
Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep!"

When Cissy had finished there was a pause. Then Gabrielle said:

"Don't sing that again, Cissy; I cannot bear it," and burst into an agony of weeping.

In a moment Cissy was off the music-stool, and kneeling at Gabrielle's side. She had seen Gabrielle cry before, but nothing like this had Cissy ever seen, in Gabrielle or in any other. As she knelt there, all too conscious of her impotence to soothe, taking helpless note of the dejected, the despairing attitude; of the head bowed low upon the hands; of the girlish frame every minute convulsed by a terrible, deep-drawn sob; of the tears flowing on and on, as though exhaustless, she felt that here was wretchedness which she could not fathom, could not even comprehend. Something of awe mingled with her compassion; something of fear also—sorrow in the abstract seemed brought so alarmingly near!

"Gabrielle—dear, darling child—do, do try to stop crying. You will make yourself so ill! Do try, darling. Don't give way like this."

"I wouldn't, Cissy—if I could help it. But I can't—I can't stop."

And Cissy said nothing further. Claspings her arms round Gabrielle's waist, and resting her head upon her shoulder, she waited until the storm should pass.

Suddenly the door opened; James burst into the room, a buttonless glove in his hand.

"Here, Cissy! have you got a needle and—"

He stopped, in blank consternation. One hasty step forward he made; then paused again. What right had he to be her comforter?

"Send him away—oh, send him away," whispered Gabrielle, tightening the pressure of her hands; and Cissy frowned at him furiously, shaking her head. But James did not stir. He stood as if spell-bound—as if his eyes were riveted to the sight.

A moment later up jumped Cissy, darted like a flash of lightning across the room, and, holding the door open, marshalled him out, with the air of an offended queen. Out he went—but drew her after him; claspings her wrist so firmly that she could not have escaped without a struggle, which, for Gabrielle's sake, she forewent, and, in a highly-dignified manner, allowed herself to follow in his train.

Then, setting her back against the closed door, she regarded him with a stony stare, and inquired what he wanted.

"Tell me at once, if you please; and be quick about it. I must go back to Gabrielle."

"Cissy, what is the matter with Gabrielle?"

"Oh! Is that all? You would like to know, are you say; you were always inquisitive. But I sha'n't tell you. So leave my wrist alone."

"Cissy, I must know."

"Must, indeed! Are you Mr. Godfrey, that you should come in this lofty manner, and demand to hear Gabrielle's secrets? And all this time she may be fainting! Do get away to The Featherstone, James! how can you be so ungentlemanlike? Let me go, I say."

And Cissy, wrenching her wrist free—a matter of little difficulty, for James perceived that he should gain nothing by detaining it—rushed back into the school-room, taking the precaution to lock the door behind her.

Gabrielle was quiet now; the tears had ceased. "Oh, did he see?" she asked languidly, as Cissy resumed her place.

"Yes, he did; and serve him right!" muttered Cissy, under her breath.

"Never mind, darling," she said aloud; "don't trouble yourself about him."

"But did he see?"

"Well, of course, he saw," replied Cissy, coaxingly, "but what then? He could not know—"

Here she stopped; feeling that, to use a vulgar expression, she was "putting her foot in it."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, dear! what dreadful pertinacity!" thought Cissy. "Say? Nothing much. Only asked what was the matter, and—"

"And—?"

"Gabrielle, you are incorrigible. Well! he got into a desperate state, dragged me out of the room—just see my wrist!" said Cissy, in a parenthesis: displaying a very pretty white wrist, on which the faintest possible tinge of red was fast becoming invisible—"and asked what was the matter with Gabrielle? said he must know, or some such nonsense: and glared like a tiger—or what is the creature? However, I told him there was no must in the case, and . . . etc., etc. Now, Gabrielle, go to sleep."

"What else did you tell him?"

"Oh, Gabrielle! Gabrielle! what shall I do? Well! if you will be obstinate—I inquired: which was unnecessary, for of course I knew: whether he were Mr. Godfrey."

"Oh, Cissy! why did you say that? I wish you hadn't!"

But the wish was not very strong. And he had been "in a desperate state;" had said that he "must know." He cared for her still, then, a little. Perhaps—oh, perhaps—some day, all might come right!

And as she lay back in her chair, resigning herself to her fatigue, there was more of peace in Gabrielle's heart than she had known for weeks.

"Now you must have some wine. I'll get some myself, from the housekeeper's room; that Wilcox mayn't see your eyes. Lie still. I shall be back in a moment."

Away flew Cissy. But she was not back in a moment; or in many moments. The housekeeper was up-stairs; the wine was under lock and key; and a considerable delay ensued. And, meanwhile, Gabrielle, thoroughly exhausted, dropped asleep: the tears still wet upon her cheeks.

James was hanging about, restlessly, in the hall: pausing sometimes before a window, sometimes before a statue; but seeing nothing. He had been in a hurry, when he entered the school-room; and, in fact, his horse was, at this moment, waiting, saddled and bridled, at the foot of the steps. Both horse and hurry, however, were forgotten now.

Presently, the suspense became intolerable. He returned to the school-room, opened the door. Cissy was gone, Gabrielle asleep; he entered with hushed tread, walked to her side, and, half-sitting, half-leaning, on the table near her, gazed. And as he gazed, his heart sank: lower, lower. Upon her brow was the impress of suffering. Something in the fall of her eyelids spoke of utter weariness, something in the lines of her mouth, of that inward sickness which wears the life away. Suddenly she moved, and spoke. He bent his head, and caught the words:

"'Never hereafter to wake or to weep—'"

He recognized the quotation; yet he shuddered.

"So you are here? That's quite unnecessary," said Cissy's voice behind him; "I beg you'll go again—Ah! I thought I should find her asleep."

"Cissy, how delicate Gabrielle looks!"

"Fearfully delicate," assented Cissy, with a thrill of vicious delight; "exactly as though she were going into a consumption. And I believe she is."

He turned passionately upon her.

"What right have you to say that—and in such a flippant tone? Is it a thing to be talked of lightly? as if—"

He paused, and bit his lip: his voice had failed.

At this moment, with a little sigh, Gabrielle awoke. James, taken unawares, had no time to turn away. She had read of a look like this which now met hers; she had never seen one, before. She did not start, or color: she only

drank it in, as though she were dreaming. She forgot for the instant her own identity; forgot every thing but those dark eyes, and their depth of unutterable love.

Suddenly she remembered; blushed crimson; and rose from her chair.

"Cissy, I have been asleep, I think. I hardly knew where I was."

"No; you are tired. Sit down again."

It was James who spoke: his tone very gentle, very low.

She obeyed, she sat down, strangely happy. He poured out a glass of wine, with his own hand; he bent, and gave it to her.

"You will feel better, when you have drunk this," he said.—"Cissy—take care of her."

And he was gone, as though he could trust himself no longer.

"When the night is darkest, the dawn is nearest." Only a few minutes ago, how dark had Gabrielle's night appeared! and now, when she least expected it, light was come. Whether real dawn, or merely a transitory ray, she did not know. But one thing she did know. One fact that look had revealed.

"He does love me," she said, to herself, as she sank back among the cushions. "I can't understand it. I can't tell why he is like this. But he does love me."

The bitterest drop in her cup of trouble had passed.

And James?

James had taken refuge in the cold silence of the chapel. There alone, save for the passionless monuments, the oaken angels, the saints on the stained windows, his agony might give itself vent.

"It cannot be that she loves me . . . has loved me all this time . . . that I have broken her heart . . . hers! . . . And I have gone too far to recede . . . O my God—O my God!"

CHAPTER XXX.

"Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways,
Where if I cannot be gay, let a passionless peace be my lot.

And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness of love,
The honey of poison-flowers, and all the measureless ill."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

JAMES, as he left the chapel, felt that he was degraded. He mounted his horse and rode slowly away, pondering this degradation. Every moment revealed to him his own conduct in a more despicable light. When he had fancied himself

highest, grandest, he had been playing the part of a villain—of an egotistical villain. He had closed his eyes to Gabrielle, and had opened them only to himself. His own aspirations, his own advancement, had formed his one idea.

But again he said within his heart, that he had gone too far to recede. How would the world regard him if he turned his back on Miss Featherstone now? after attentions so public, so deliberate, as he had made it his business to pay her; attentions which she had encouraged, which—as all might see—had won her heart, or—James bitterly thought—the thing that answered to her heart? How would such conduct appear to her family, to her friends? How, indeed, to Gabrielle? Was it probable that Gabrielle would allow herself to be cast off or taken up at his pleasure? Of course she could not penetrate his motives. To her, he must simply seem a heartless, selfish flirt—a slave to mere beauty too—nay, even a hypocrite! For he remembered conversations which had unfolded to her the sanctuary of his inner life; which had revealed to her his highest aims, his most ambitious dreams. How, in her sight, did his practice and his theory accord? And, low as he had doubtless already sunk in her estimation, would he not if, to return to her, he forsook Miss Featherstone, sink even lower? Would she not scorn and spurn him? as—well, perhaps, as he deserved?

Or, supposing every obstacle removed, supposing that she did receive him, and he made her his wife, would not this bring him to the very point which to avoid, he had brought so much misery upon himself, and, as he feared, upon her? For if, when he scarcely spoke to her, from day to day; when their fellowship was chiefly confined to meals at the same table, to a sojourn under the same roof, he yet from day to day loved her more, felt her grow deeper into his heart; if this were the case now, how would it be were they united in the closest of all ties—were she, in the sight of God and man, his own, to love and cherish, as a duty, till death? Such a state of things could not—no, could not—exist, without absorbing his whole heart, and soul, and mind; without, as he had dreaded, subordinating his intellect to his affections. And then he would have to own himself beaten; his own master nevermore!

Yet, if she loved him—if he had made her love him—and so the storm began afresh, and the same conflicting questions repeated themselves in a ceaseless round, until all was per-

plexed together, and only one definite idea remained. On the following day Charlie Godfrey was expected. Olivia anticipated great results from his visit. It might be that Olivia was right, and that all indecision would thus be set to rest. It might be; James believed that he hoped it. He determined, any way, to wait and see.

Later the same afternoon, in turning over a packet of papers, he came upon a leaf torn from an exercise-book, and covered with his own handwriting, as it had been at the age of eighteen.

"A TRUE PHILOSOPHER."

"A true philosopher will never suffer himself to be greatly depressed or elated; excessive joy, grief, expectation, desire, being equally incompatible with the calm dignity which he will make it his first effort to attain. He will therefore love nothing so much as to be unable to resign it with composure. He will hate nothing so much as in any degree to bias his sense of justice. He will shrink from no pain, no self-denial, which may assist him in the ultimate achievement of good. And the term 'good' he will not, with the majority of men, understand to mean pleasure, or happiness; but that state of circumstances which is most favorable to the highest development of his nature.

"He will preserve a rigid watch over the lower faculties, over the appetites and affections—both alike dangerous to one who would maintain a due equilibrium in all things. He will guard against any emotion that might lead him to depend upon the support which may fail, the favor which may change, the advice which may misguide, of a fellow-creature. In short, he will endeavor more and more to be sufficient for himself. Thus no alteration in the things or persons around him will have power to impair his serenity; and he will gradually acquire a loftiness of soul, a fixedness of purpose, a firmness of resolution, which will endow him with an almost unlimited control over the spirits of inferior men.

"The highest state of humanity, my unalterable conviction.

"J. F. G., Eton, May, 18—"

Did it occur to James that this sketch of his, these notions of "the highest state of humanity," might just as well have been written by some ancient pagan of Greece or Rome? Perhaps it did. Perhaps, as he stood looking out over the park, the paper in his hand, some faint glimmer of light shadowed forth to him mountain-peaks which, exalted as was his standard, left that

standard far behind. But the glimmer died away. James laid down the paper with a sigh. He had fallen many steps backward, he thought, since the days when he was a boy.

Charlie Godfrey arrived at the appointed time, and Gabrielle, when she met his sunshiny smile, and felt her hand pressed warmly in his brotherly grasp, forgot for the moment all her troubles. Of course Olivia contrived that he should take her in to dinner, and she would have been almost happy, she thought, as she sat there by his side, but for the consciousness of frequent and—she fancied—anxious glances, thrown in their direction by James. And after each glance he was thoughtful, silent; he seemed unhappy, harassed, worn. Oh, how puzzling it all was! If she could only, though but for one instant, look into his mind!

She would have beheld a strange confusion! Deeper and deeper became his perplexity, fiercer his conflict, throughout each day of Charlie Godfrey's visit. In spite of all that he had endeavored to wish and hope on the subject, he felt, as he saw them together, that should he ever so see them as husband and wife the spectacle would drive him mad. He was driven half mad already by the affectionate smiles which Gabrielle so often bestowed on this "true knight" of hers; by the brightness which shone out on the wan young face whenever he approached; by the eager *tête-à-tête* conversations in retired corners—conversations in which topics seemed never to fail or interest to flag.

And, meanwhile, The Featherstone was growing less endurable every day! James had of late discerned in her a slight coarseness of tone, something which jarred on his fastidious notions of woman as she should be. In fact, the young lady believed her prize secure, far gone, moreover, in that interesting state of feeling which is described as "blind." And thus, half unconsciously, she had begun to relax the guard that at first, aware of his high standard, she had maintained; to suffer her words to flow, without picking or culling, from her lips; freely, without fear of consequences, to betray a strange laxity of principle in little things, a strange confusion as regarded the boundaries of wrong and right. James, in his turn, began to be disgusted—a little alarmed even. Was this the woman whom he would take to be the wife of his bosom? And as The sank in his estimation, Gabrielle rose; her gentle manners, her ingenuousness, her innocence, gained by contrast.

Had Gabrielle died at this time, or had she

married and gone away, her memory would have remained in his soul as a saint in a shrine. It would have been to him a sacred thing surrounded by a shadowy glory, and worthy of all reverence ever more. He was growing even now to idealize her after the Dante and Beatrice fashion, to see her, not as she was—a half-formed, rather morbid girl—but as his heart depicted her—a being "peerless, without stain."

"What shall I do? What ought I to do?" he now continually asked himself. The bright youthfulness which had often astonished admirers of his genius was fast fading into an habitual expression of care; while the purple hollows below his eyes, the lines in his forehead, bore witness to days, and nights also, of conflict and unrest.

Charlie at this time felt strongly inclined to demand from James, in so many words, an explanation of his conduct as regarded Gabrielle. But he restrained himself, conscious of his helplessness, and aware that the wisest plan in the end would be to let things take their course. There was, however, a coldness, a meaning reserve in his manner toward James, which James observing, and judging Charlie by himself, attributed to jealousy. Cissy observed it also, and Cissy did not attribute it to jealousy. Cissy and Charlie had liked one another from the first, and their mutual interest in Gabrielle served as a mutual attraction. Before the end of Charlie's visit Cissy felt herself sufficiently intimate with him to determine that she would, if she could, "have it out with him," as respected James and Gabrielle; say something in palliation of her brother's conduct, and try to insinuate a few subtle words of comfort on his own score. In her inmost soul Cissy was filled with wonder that Gabrielle could prefer James!

Accordingly, as, one afternoon, she was returning from a ramble in the park, she was not at all sorry to be overtaken by Charlie; who had been to see Mr. Morris. And suddenly—she hardly knew how—she had plunged into the thick of the subject; was telling Charlie that she had observed his savageness to James, and had guessed the cause; and it was something connected with Gabrielle. Then, as his ready color confessed the truth, she went on to expatiate; and ere long Charlie found himself discussing, quite openly, the whole affair, confiding to her the report which he had heard, his suspicions, and all the rest.

"And if Gabrielle were to die," he exclaimed, warring with his subject, "if this cough were to end in—in—" his voice choked; "I shall always

consider—forgive me, I must say it! that her blood lies at your brother's door."

"Now, Mr. Godfrey, don't be grandiose; and do hear me out. She is not at all likely to die. And my brother—well, I will secretly confess, that, although he is my brother, I feel no less infuriated with him than you do—perhaps even more. But, to give him his due, I believe that, until within the last few days, he had very little, if any, idea, that Gabrielle cared much about him. You don't know James. He is very odd—very proud and high-flown. He opines that falling in love is beneath the dignity of man—or something absurd of the kind. And, so assured was he that he never should, nor could, fall in love himself, that he did not know—of this I am certain—what his feelings for Gabrielle meant. He liked to be with her; and he indulged the liking—without thinking of consequences."

"Then he ought to have thought of them."

"Of course he ought. But he didn't. I'm telling you facts. Then, at last, he woke up, found out the truth, and changed his tactics. As to his violent courtship in the other quarter, that I'll leave. I confess I can't account for that. But one thing I know—he is intensely miserable."

"Well! it is a pretty mess, altogether," said Charlie, in an exasperated tone—"loving one person, and marrying another! I can't make head nor tail of it."

"We must take people as they are, Mr. Godfrey; 'grin and bear' them. I've long made up my mind to that, angry as I feel with them all—two or three excepted. As for James—you may safely leave him to avenge himself! His repentance will be bitter enough, never fear."

"So it should be," said Charlie, gruffly.

"Yes; and so should yours and mine, or Sundays might as well be called fibbing-days. But you see, in 'this 'ere world,' Mr. Godfrey, we neither do what we should, nor get what we should. Now here we are at the house—I must go in. Let me say just one thing more, though," said Cissy, looking into his downcast face.

"Well?" he answered, gloomily.

"Mr. Godfrey, I do feel so very sure that all will come right at last. James is wicked and miserable now; and The is beautiful and happy; and Gabrielle is ill and desponding; and you are vexed. But just have a little patience, and the clouds will clear away, and the tables will be turned, and James will be good and repentant, and The ugly and wretched, and Gabrielle well and bright again, and you—as happy as you

ought to be. There—that's my prophecy! So take heart, and remember:

"The darkest day,

Wait till to-morrow, will have passed away!"

She ran off into the house; and Charlie stood looking after her.

"What a dear little sunbeam that is!" he thought, as she vanished up the staircase.

Then he went back, and walked about in the park, thinking of better times.

But Cissy was not a sunbeam that shone on all alike.

"Gabrielle," said she, at bedtime, the same evening, entering Gabrielle's room, in her dressing-gown—a pretty, Cissy-like dressing-gown, all white muslin and blue ribbon—her long hair streaming over it, in delightful confusion, her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks flushed—"Gabrielle! I have something to tell you."

"Is it any thing very dreadful, Cissy? You look grave."

"You shall hear what it is in a moment. Perhaps you may call it dreadful. But first—for I see your eyes dilating—learn, to your comfort, that it is in no way mixed up with ghosts or murderers, or escaped lunatics, or any dreadfulness of that sort. So don't look at the wardrobe, as if you expected it to open, and something—definite or indefinite—to come forth and devour you."

"I was not thinking of the wardrobe, Cissy. Pray go on. I want to hear this wonderful piece of news."

"Oh! 'wonderful,' as it isn't 'dreadful!' No, my dear; I'm afraid there's no wonderfulness about it. At least, it has nothing to do with comets, or monsters, or carriages-turned-over-and-nobody-killed, or any thing of that kind. It is simply—harden your heart, Gabrielle! that Mr. Trevor has proposed to me; and that I—have sent him about his business. Or rather—for 'gentility' of expression is a duty—have given him his *congé*."

"Oh, Cissy, have you? Do begin at the beginning, and tell me the whole story. I am so very curious."

"I know it, my dear. If you looked a shade less tired, I should feel myself bound to put you to a little harmless suspense. But since you don't, I'll have compassion, and bring matters to a speedy conclusion. I was alone in the conservatory, then, inspecting my pet cactus, when who should appear, without the slightest warning—or sound—but Mr. Trevor! He either walked on tiptoe, or his boots are soled with fur. Which, is most probable, Gabrielle?"

"The fur, I should think. What did he say?"

"Say? I was never more startled in my life. It came like a flash of lightning. One minute, I was looking at my cactus; and the next, a whole volley of hearts and passions and life-long devotions, were being lavished at my feet; or on my head—which is the poetical rendering? Such a speech! He must have composed it all beforehand—learned it by heart, and then spouted it very fast, because he was afraid of forgetting it. And suppose he had forgotten some of the principal words? What a jumble that would have made! Or transposed them? Better still? Eh, Gabrielle?"

"Oh do, dear Cissy, be serious!"

"Dear Gabrielle, so I will. I gave him his full fling, heard him quite out, before I answered a word. In fact, I was considering—don't disown me!—how sharp I could make the final blow. However, he had so surprised me, as to expatriate my wits; and all, after all, that came forth from me, was: 'I think, Mr. Trevor, you must mistake me for Miss Ward!'"

"Oh, Cissy! What happened then?"

"Why, another volley. He had foreseen that remark, no doubt; and had prepared accordingly. I'm sure he must congratulate himself that he didn't, in his excitement, recite the second composition where the first should have been; or *vice versa*! All things considered, he got through very well; only he might have varied the style, a little; copied Dickens in the first, you know, and Johnson in the second; the effect would have been better. As it was, all was 'much of a muchness.' Who could bear comparison with me? What was Miss Ward by my side? Etc., etc. With a wind-up about the Koh-i-nor."

"The Koh-i-nor, Cissy?"

"Well—he said a priceless diamond; but that's all the same, you know. Then he stopped to take breath, and—I will be serious now, Gabrielle—I told him exactly what I thought of him and his behavior; put both before him, in the darkest possible colors. After that, I felt rewarded. Never in my life, have I seen any one look more thoroughly ashamed!"

"Did you relent at all, then?"

"Relent? Most certainly not. What had he done to deserve relenting? So far from that, I waxed in majesty; and he made no attempt to justify himself; only, at the end, had the audacity to ask if I could mention any means by which he might regain my favor?"

"Well?"

"Well! I said 'Yes.'"

"'Yes, Cissy?'"

"'Yes,' my cousin. Whereat he caught; and begged me, whatever it was, to mention it directly. So I told him he could regain my favor, by regaining, if that were possible—which, judging from my own feelings, I should fear not—the favor of Miss Ward! This was the climax. Oh, Gabrielle! How I did wish that you could have seen the stately manner in which I sailed past him, and back to the saloon!"

Mr. Trevor left Farnley, the next day; and a year later, Gabrielle read the following notice in the supplement sheet of the *Times*:

"On the —th instant, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Honorable and Reverend John Ward, cousin of the bride, assisted by the Reverend Henry Trevor, brother of the bridegroom, George Trevor, Esq., barrister-at-law, to Lucy, eldest daughter of Maurice Ward, Esq."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Be strong to hope, O Heart!

Though day is bright,

The stars can only shine

In the dark night.

Be strong, O Heart of mine,

Look toward the light!

"Be strong to bear, O Heart!

Nothing is vain:

Strive not, for life is care,

And God sends pain;

Heaven is above, and there

Rest will remain!"

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

GABRIELLE had long ago promised to spend, in the course of the autumn, a fortnight with the Barbers, at Eversfield. Mrs. Barber now wrote to urge this promise, and to beg that she would come to them at once, naming a day: which happened to be the day following that fixed by Charlie Godfrey for the termination of his visit to Farnley. Olivia observed to Lady Peers that the invitation had come in the very nick of time. The change was so exactly what the dear child required, and would especially require just then! To which Lady Peers, who had all her life been an echo of Olivia, agreed. So it was settled that Gabrielle should go; and she wrote to announce her train: hardly knowing whether she were glad or sorry.

"And this is really your last evening, Charlie! How sorry I am to think that you are going away!"

"Yes, I am sorry too. But I shall be coming to Meddiscombe, in a few weeks, to read with

Hawkins, and to get a little acquainted with the people, before my ordination. And then I shall, at least, be within reach of you. That will be something."

"Yes, indeed it will. I wish the few weeks were gone. And I wish you could come with me to Eversfield. Think of me, at this time, the day after to-morrow, Charlie. Let me see: it is nine o'clock; tea will be over. I shall be sitting in the chair of state, leaning my head against the crocheted antimacassar."

"No, you won't. The journey will knock you up, and Mrs. Barber will send you straight off to bed. And at this time you'll be asleep, I hope: not lying awake, to worry yourself with morbid fancies."

"Am I morbid, Charlie?"

She spoke earnestly, as though she really wished to be informed upon the subject. And when Charlie answered, with a smile, that he thought she was—a little—she begged him to tell her how to keep the morbidness from growing.

"I don't want to be morbid, indeed; but I don't know how to help it. If you will give me a few rules, though, I'll try to obey them."

Her manner was so gentle, so humble: his heart went out to her in redoubled tenderness.

"Do you remember, years ago, reading Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life' with me? There was one line which we stopped to discuss; it has haunted me ever since."

"I know," cried Gabrielle, brightening:

"Let the dead Past bury its dead."

"Now, Gabrielle, why can't you do that? Take it as one of your rules. No better cure for morbidness, I'm sure!"

"Perhaps so," she said, almost too low for Charlie to catch, although he bent his head; "but to talk, or write, of a cure, is one thing: and to act upon it is another. When the past has been happy, peaceful, good, and the present is—just the reverse—how can one help going back in mind, and longing for the old days?"

"Gabrielle!" said Charlie, feeling as though he had already assumed something of his ministerial character, "is it grateful to repine in the present, because God has blessed us in the past?"

"Not to repine," said Gabrielle. "But—"

She paused.

"I'll tell you what, Gabrielle, you're too fond of sitting among the tombs, raking at old ashes. You'd be far happier, if you went out into the living world, and made the best of it!"

He was preaching no less to himself than to her. As he spoke, his own courage rose.

"We have each a cross to bear. I have mine, and you have yours. If we never, till now, felt much of their weight, let us be thankful for that. You know the old sentence we liked so much. 'Crosses are ladders—'"

"Toward heaven."

"Yes. Well, don't be afraid to climb them, Gabrielle. And there's another thing. I've been a great deal with Mr. Morris, lately; the good that old fellow does one, is really wonderful! We were discussing this very subject—the troubles of life, and so forth, and he said—"

"Oh, I know his pet idea: that the world is a school."

"Yes: not a new idea, either. But, somehow, he makes it new; I suppose, because he realizes it so clearly. It's easy enough to talk, as you said; and to believe, in a misty, unreal kind of way. But when you come to turn your faith to every-day use, 'tis a different matter. Judge him by conventionalities, and he's an uncouth specimen as ever lived; but look at him in the school sense, and he's high above us all. In the sixth form, I take it: and near the top."

"But what were you going to tell me, Charlie?"

"Oh, by-the-by! He said, the other day: 'Fact is, our lessons wouldn't be half so difficult, if we sat still and learned them—instead of pushing aside the books, sulking and fidgeting, like naughty children. Then the rod has to come in.' I thought I never heard a truer speech!"

"No"—agreed Gabrielle, musing.

"Well, Gabrielle! Here are two rules for you; and, as to that, for me. Don't brood over the past—learn the lessons of the present. Now I've lectured long enough. I'll stop. You must consider this my first extempore sermon."

"Thank you, dear Charlie. You have helped me so much."

And as she spoke, she smiled—the first really hopeful smile which, throughout his visit, he had seen upon her face.

"What a happy thing that I've not betrayed myself to her!" he thought, afterward. "She would never have felt at home with me again! As it is, I do believe that I may sometimes be able to help her—as she says—just a little."

Yes, he was truly showing himself her true knight.

Olivia had fully expected that Charlie's visit would bring matters to a crisis. On the morning

of his departure—having waited half an hour, for Gabrielle to recover the first agonies of the separation—she repaired to the school-room—where Gabrielle was sitting—under pretence of finding a book.

"How do you feel, dear, now?" she inquired, searching the shelves.

"She is as well as can be expected," said Cissy, in a sepulchral tone.

"Cissy! I did not see you!—By-the-by, I wonder if you would just go up-stairs, and fetch my small bunch of keys? You will find it, either in one of the looking-glass drawers, or in the work-table, or in a drawer of the black cabinet. You don't mind a journey, I know."

"Of course not, my dear, any more than I mind leaving the room to oblige a friend. I'll go, and I'll turn into a stoopid, and I'll look without seeing, and I'll forget what I'm sent for, and run down to ask, and at the foot of the stairs remember, and run up again. Any thing to oblige you—or Gabrielle."

And away ran Cissy, in high glee.

"That's right," thought Olivia, breathing more freely. "She will tell me, now we are alone."

An expectant silence on Olivia's part. An absent silence on the part of Gabrielle. No result.

"You will miss Mr. Godfrey, dear child."

"Yes, I shall, or at least I should dreadfully, if I were not going to Eversfield."

"You enjoyed having him?"

"Oh, so much. It was so kind in you to ask him."

Another long pause. Then—

"Olivia."

"It is coming," thought Olivia.

"Well, dear?"

"Shall I take gingerbread or butter-scotch to the little Barbers? Or both?"

"Both, to please all tastes," said Olivia, in meek endurance. Could it be that after all nothing had happened? that Mr. Godfrey was gone without a sign? that Gabrielle was—where she was before? Poor child! Olivia hoped that she understood him, otherwise this state of things must be sadly trying.

"When does Mr. Godfrey come to Meddiscombe?"

"Very soon, I am glad to say. Yes, Olivia, I think I'll take both: and some sugar-candy, too."

"This is only a blind," thought Olivia.

"He can't settle down in the rectory just yet, I suppose?"

"Charlie? Oh no. Not till he becomes a priest."

"Ah, exactly. And, of course, before then he would not dream of setting up an establishment of his own? It would scarcely be wise."

"No, he will live in lodgings," said Gabrielle, staring.

"Just so. And he will not be able to think of marrying either, at present."

"I don't quite see that. There's nothing to prevent his thinking of it to-day if he chooses! Meddiscombe is a capital living, and he wouldn't mind a year's engagement."

"Ah! but, my dear—" interposed the consolatory Olivia—"you cannot conceive the delicacy which many young men feel about that sort of thing. Some, I believe, ~~think~~ it quite sinful to propose until they can offer a home. And although ~~this~~, perhaps, is not exactly to the point, still—~~he might~~ not wish to bind her."

"Her! Whom?" exclaimed Gabrielle, now fairly roused.

"Oh . . . any one for whom he might care. Or perhaps ~~he might~~ wish her to see more of the world first, to know more people. Or—"

"You seem very much interested in this wife of Charlie's?" said Gabrielle, laughing, and looking with some curiosity at Olivia. "Have you any one in your eye?"

Before Olivia, struggling between truth and delicacy, could answer this embarrassing question, a rattle of keys was heard, and Cissy reappeared.

"Well, Olivia! Have I been long enough? I pulled out and put in every drawer three times at least. I rummaged in the ottoman. I overturned your work-box—don't start, I made it quite tidy again. I stopped in the passage to talk to Sarah; and, in fact, I did my best. But is this the right bunch? Because, if you like, I'll go again, and be more stoopid still. You have only to speak, beloved sister, and I obey—as some one says in some novel."

"Give the keys to me, my dear Cissy; and don't talk nonsense," was Olivia's sole response. Wherewith she departed: leaving Cissy to perform a *pas seul* round the table.

James was in the hall. He looked pale and haggard: more like night than morning.

"Dear James, are you ill? Have you got a headache?" asked Olivia, anxiously.

"How you do harp upon health, Olivia!" he exclaimed, in an irritable tone.

Then, seeing that she was hurt, he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't mind my bearishness; I'm not worth

being minded—one way or the other. I want to speak to you. Can you come to my study?"

She assented, followed him to the study, and he shut the door.

He shut the door; and then he walked to the mantel-piece, and stood gazing into the fireless grate. Then went to the table, took up a book, glanced it over, and laid it down. Finally, he retired to a distant window, and there remained: looking out.

"Olivia, do you know whether any thing has come of this visit of young Godfrey's?"

"Any thing with respect to Gabrielle, you mean?"

"Any thing with respect to Gabrielle. You fancied—"

"Yes. But I begin to feel puzzled. I can't understand. He has not said any thing to her. At least, I have been with her in the school-room alone; and I believe that, if he had, she would have told me: she is so very open, dear child.—Yes, certainly, she would have told me!"

"There is no doubt whatever of it, I am—afraid," he was about to add: but paused. Was he afraid? Was this feeling at work within him, pain or pleasure?

"I begin to think, Olivia, that you have been on the wrong tack altogether; and that this is only a 'brother and sister' attachment, after all."

"Well—it is possible," Olivia sighingly admitted; "but I should be sorry! Such a nice thing for her! No, James. I can't give up the notion, just yet. In another year, perhaps—"

"Oh, if you come to talk of years—" said James: and turned away. Years! Weeks were years to him now; days were months; minutes were hours.

When Olivia was gone, he walked back to the mantel-piece, bowed his head upon it, and positively groaned. If, through his selfishness, Gabrielle suffered, she was bitterly avenged! Even Cissy would have longed to comfort him, had she looked into his heart.

Charlie's departure was not the only one which took place on this day. The shy girls came to wish Gabrielle good-by; overwhelming her with thanks for her kindness, and with entreaties that she would write to them very often. Moreover, with lamentations, in that they were to be driven to Rotherbridge by Cousin James, and had no idea what to say to him on the road! From Rotherbridge James did not return until after dinner; and then—greatly to Theodosia's surprise—he did not appear in the drawing-room.

At breakfast, on the ensuing morning, he was missing again. He had ridden out, Wilcox said, quite early: and had not yet returned. Where could he be, Olivia exclaimed. He must have forgotten that Gabrielle was going. He must have lost himself. He must have—indeed, what must he not have done, according to Olivia!

The carriage was waiting; the luggage was strapped upon the roof; the horses were growing impatient. Olivia, for the twentieth time, declared that it was sadly provoking: James would be so sorry, when he came home. She would not allow the carriage to depart, until she had herself made a tour of all his in-door haunts. His bedroom, his study, the library, the chapel; each was searched: and each was tenantless.

"How unfortunate!" she said, reappearing with a disappointed countenance; "have you any message to leave for him, Gabrielle? I suppose you would like me to wish him good-by?"

"I have no message, thank you," said Gabrielle, evasively. She kissed Cissy once again; once again promised Olivia to take great care of herself, and, above all, never to wet her feet. Then she stepped into the carriage; Olivia's dignified maid stepped after her; and the door was shut.

A momentary delay was still occasioned by Cissy's running to the window, with Gypsy, and trying—ineffectually—to make Gabrielle kiss him. Wilcox respectfully observed that it was ten o'clock, and that Jeffries had better drive quickly. In another second, she was being whirled away, through the park.

And no James—no good-by! She was not to see him, she was not to speak to him, for a whole fortnight. And, in all probability, when she met him again, he would be Miss Featherstone's betrothed husband. For, in a few days, Miss Featherstone was to leave Farnley; and James would not let her go, Gabrielle was sure, without bringing matters to a conclusion.

It was a wretched drive to Rotherbridge, a wretched journey that followed. If only she could have taken all quietly, and in patience, it would have been so much easier, she knew, to bear. But now she felt so rebellious! "Why,"—cried a passionate voice in her heart—"why might I not see him? Why might I not say good-by? Why was even that poor little drop of solace denied me? It could not have done me any harm. I did so long for it: it would have helped to still this craving. I should have gone so much more peacefully! Oh, it is too hard. I cannot bear it."

"You must bear it," said another voice. "And this is very wrong."

"I cannot bear it—I cannot," cried the first again. So, for hours, the conflict raged.

At length, a fellow-passenger, a lady of the Olivia stamp, inquired whether she were ill, and offered wine and a shawl; and Gabrielle, as she declined both, felt that, even among strangers, must her strict self-watch be maintained. She called her countenance to order, accepted *Punch* from a neighboring gentleman; and tried to forget Farnley.

Still, as the day wore on, and they neared Brackdale, the Eversfield post-town, she could not but recall the time when she had seen it last; going over in her mind all that had happened since then, that had helped to change her, as, since then, she was changed, she knew. Then, somehow or other, though she had fully intended to trace out all the old landmarks, and had long been straining her eyes, in search of one particular spire, she contrived—she was so tired, so worn—to fall asleep. And she dreamed that her troubles were over; that she was with James at rest: only that rest was the grave. She was lying far down in the earth, she thought; but she could see what went on above. She saw the blue sky, and the white clouds drifting across it; and the daisies, and the grass on her own grave: and James keeping watch among them. His face was partly hidden, leaning upon his hand; the other hand rested on the grave, and Gabrielle felt its touch. She felt it through the sod, as though it rested on her own breast; and the feeling was peace. It was peace even to know that he was sitting there, so near; and the church-bells were ringing dreamily; and her misery was forgotten "as waters that pass away."

"Brackd'le! Brackd'le!" shouted the railway men, and Gabrielle awoke. Her journey was ended; here was the old station: and, in the distance, the old spire; the inn, the bridge, the river; all the same. Here, too, on the platform, was the well-known face of Mrs. Barber, vulgar, red, good-natured—not changed a whit. Her bonnet was the very bonnet which she had worn the autumn before; her gown, the "best gown" of the days when Gabrielle saw her last. The train stopped; she hastened toward it, beaming with smiles.

"Here you are, my dear! This is a treat indeed!" And then and there, regardless of observers, she folded Gabrielle in her capacious embrace. "Now, where's your luggage?—Tom, my dear!"—as a sheepish boy advanced from

the background—"Tom, see to Gabrielle's luggage. In the fore van. Two boxes and a bag.—Come along, my love. Leave 'im to get it. We'll go at once to the fly. Here it is; and there's your luggage; all right, you see.—No, Tom, you ride outside. Well! now, at last, we're off, and I shall 'ave time to look at you. And bless me, Gabrielle! why did you not say that you were ill? Here 'ave I been fixing all manner of plans, and not in a blessed one will you be able to engage."

"I am not ill, indeed, Mrs. Barber; only a little weak."

"But goodness gracious, child, what a cough you've got! I hope they take care of you at Farnley, now?" said Mrs. Barber, half resentfully.

"Oh, yes; too much, I think. Olivia is the best nurse in the world."

"So she is, to be sure. I recollect. I shall commence on my own score, now, though. You shall have jelly, and rum and milk, and every thing good. That's what you want, I see: and lor me, won't Mr. Barber scold, if I don't give it you! Why, you're as thin as a whipping-post; and your cheeks are just like a pair of mealy potatoes!"

With which attractive description of Gabrielle's looks, Mrs. Barber relapsed into silence. She saw that the poor child's heart was too full for words, as, one by one, the old familiar places dawned upon her, and in the distance appeared the gray tower of Eversfield church.

"It seems just like coming home," she said to herself. At the moment, by the vivid force of imagination, coming home it really was to her! She had been on a visit; Mrs. Barber had volunteered to fetch her from Brackdale; her father, in the rectory-garden, was listening for the sound of the wheels, ready to fold her in his arms, and to say how sadly he had missed her. But now they were rolling up the village street; and on the pavement, close by, she saw a clergyman, a stranger. "Our rector!" whispered Mrs. Barber. A young man, strong and active: not the beloved form, that Gabrielle remembered,—a little bent, a little worn, a little feeble. Presently he disappeared down the familiar turning which led to the rectory. They, in the fly, passed it; and then Gabrielle realized that the Farnley life had been no mere visit, that this was no coming home.

Charlie's prophecy proved correct. Mrs. Barber, almost immediately after tea, ordered her young visitor to bed; and so thoroughly ex-

haunted was she, that she felt thankful to obey. Drawing up the blind, and lying down with her face toward the window—whence, in dark outline, she could see the church-tower and the rectory-chimneys, rising among the trees: Gabrielle soon sank into the soundest slumber that she had known for weeks.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"If the sense is hard
To alien ears, I did not speak to these—
No, not to thee, but to thyself in me:
Hard is my doom and thine: thou knowest it all."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

It was morning. Gabrielle opened her eyes, to find the sunbeams shining on the golden head of Mrs. Barber's youngest child, who stood beside the bed, and proffered a letter, directed to Miss Wynn.

"A letter for me? From Charlie, I suppose. Why—!"

She stopped short. That firm, clear handwriting, that seal, with the crest and the initials, — what was there in these to make her color rise, her eyes glisten, her heart beat so fast? The child lingered, moving to and fro, chattering about blackberries, and chickens, and new dolls; but Gabrielle heard not a syllable. She had torn open the envelope; she was drinking in the letter—as one who has long thirsted, might drink water, fresh and cold.

"FARNLEY, September —th, 18—"

"MY DEAR GABRIELLE,—You will be surprised, I dare say, to hear from me: but I cannot rest until I have in some measure relieved my mind by writing these few lines. I am well aware that, during the past month, my conduct to you has been—or rather has seemed—little short of actual rudeness: wanting even in those common forms of courtesy which every lady has a right to expect from every gentleman. But it is not in my power to explain or to extenuate any thing that has passed. I must resign myself, inexpressibly painful though such resignation be, to the forfeiture of your esteem. The one hope left to me is the hope that you will believe me when I say that reasons, which I regarded as weighty and powerful reasons, have seemed to render it absolutely necessary for me to avoid your society. I am expressing myself incoherently; but, if you could see my mind, you would not wonder. To-morrow you go—I dare not trust myself to

see you, or to wish you good-by. You will know, on receiving this, how to interpret my absence. I shall not rest"—a second time that expression—"until I hear that you have forgiven my" (some word erased) "my rudeness of the last few weeks. The past is gone, and may not be undone. I can only implore your pardon.

"Believe me ever,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"J. F. GORDON."

"You mustn't get up to breakfast. Mamma says so," cried the child; "do you hear? Do you hear? Do you want to get up?"

"I want nothing—except to be alone, darling."

"Well—I'll go and see about your breakfast, then. Mamma said that I might make your toast."

She danced out of the room; and Gabrielle was left to read each sentence over, until she knew all by heart. Then to lie still, clasping the letter in both hands, and thinking.

"It is his farewell," she repeated again and again. This, for the first few minutes, was her only idea. Afterward, on considering more closely, she became aware of two facts. That James was overwhelmed with remorse; repenting either his early attentions to her, or their sudden cessation—which, she could not decide. That he expected, and was evidently craving for, an answer to what he had written. Yes, she must write in return; and how should she express herself?

She must hide, with the utmost care, the true state of her mind. Whether or no his letter had been prompted by any suspicion on this score, she could not tell. But, since that was possible, she must do her best to obliterate such suspicion. Her note must be very calm, very indifferent; friendly, yet not affectionate; cool, yet not resentful. As to resentment, indeed, Gabrielle felt none. Some lurking sparks of it she had, at one time, felt; but this letter had extinguished them for ever. If he had made her miserable, he had made himself so. If he had spoilt her life, he had spoilt his own. Besides, there was certainly some mistake, some misunderstanding: this thought was her chief consolation. She was sure that he had not wilfully deceived her. She pitied him very much.

When she was dressed, she sat down and wrote her answer. Finished, she read it over, tears blinding her eyes.

EVERSFIELD, September —, 18—.

"DEAR JAMES: "Thank you for your letter. I am sorry if you have made yourself at all un-

easy on my account. I had not observed any want of courtesy in your manner. Of course, when the house was full of people, you could not be expected to pay particular attention to me. You know best whether there be any thing to forgive. If so, I do forgive you. I had a very unadventurous journey, and arrived here quite safely. Mrs. Barber met me at Brackdale.

"I remain,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"GABRIELLE WYNN."

Yes that would do ; it must do ; although Gabrielle's whole soul revolted against its coldness, its stiffness—nay, its falseness. But she folded it, placed it in an envelope, directed and stamped it ; all quietly, calmly.

Then her task was done. She lay down again, and gave her sorrow vent.

This was what she must send to him—this formal, frigid string of sentences : when, had it been possible, she would have sent him only comfort—she would have said, "Don't be sorry for me—don't be miserable about me. You did not mean to injure me ; or, if you did, never mind. Only be happy. Forget me, if it pain you to remember me. Blot out the past from your memory, and . . . be happy : that will console me best."

Or, in her sore perplexity, taking another tone : "What is it that has separated us so ? What is it that has come between us to part us, loving one another ? What are those 'weighty and powerful reasons' ? Tell me ; they will help me to endure. The idea of duty, of necessity, will give me strength. But this darkness—I cannot bear it."

Suddenly flashed upon her mind the question : "Ought he, if he love me, to marry *her* ? He will do his duty by her, outwardly. He will keep his marriage-vow in the letter. He will 'honor and keep her'—'forsake all other' for her : but will he 'love her'—the first of all ? And if not, what is he going to do ? To perjure himself in the sight of God, if not in the sight of man—to kneel before God's altar as a hypocrite—oh, it is awful ! I cannot think of it. And yet, if he marries her—and he does mean to marry her—it will be. And I cannot help it. I cannot save him. I would give my life to save him, but oh, I cannot—I cannot."

She could only fall on her knees, and commit him to God.

"Well, my dear, here you are ! 'Ow do you feel, now you're up ? I can't say much for your looks.—Can you Mr. Barber ?"

"Hum," said Mr. Barber, glancing at Gabrielle with a professional eye ; "looks are deceitful, ain't they, Miss Wynn ? Let's feel your pulse."

Gabrielle extended her wrist, which he held for some time, after the usual pulse-feeling fashion.—This done, he again said "Hum," a meditative "hum."

"You've not been feeling very strong lately ?"

"Not very."

"A slight cough, my wife said, I think."

"Yes."

"We must see if we can't fatten you up a bit. No fasting allowed here, Mrs. Barber ? The kitchen physic is your department, you know."

"Yes, I know, and I shall see to it, you may depend," replied Mrs. Barber, with compressed lips and a nod.—"Bless me, Gabrielle ! Upon my word ! 'Ow like you're getting to your mother !"

"Am I ? But she was so pretty, I thought," said Gabrielle, in all simplicity.

"Yes—I don't mean that you come up to her, though you're by no means bad looking, my love, yourself. But it's a look, just a look, which has come over you ; and lor' me, Mr. Barber ! how strong it is !"

She shook her head as she spoke, and darted a quick glance at her husband. His countenance, however—doctor-like—was utterly impenetrable.

"I'll look at Miss Wynn again, if she'll allow me, and question her a little more closely. Just now, I must be off. Plenty of time for all. We sha'n't let her go in a hurry, now we've got her ; shall we, Mrs. Barber ? My dear—?"

He beckoned to his wife, who followed him from the room ; and Gabrielle heard them whispering on the other side of the door. Mrs. Barber shortly returned alone, with a glass of wine and a biscuit. These she placed before Gabrielle, and sat down, in solemn silence, to her work.

"'Ow long have you been in this delicate state, my dear ?" she inquired presently.

"Am I in a delicate state ? I did not know it. A cough always makes me weak. Never mind it now. I want you to tell me all the changes in Eversfield—past, present, and future. So please begin."

Mrs. Barber, never averse to a gossip, did begin. And not only had she plenty to tell, but plenty also to ask. She displayed an inexhaustible interest in the Farnley *ménage* ; making minute inquiries as to the number of servants, their wages, the "style of living," the amount of "com-

panty kept," and, last, not least, as to the personal habits of every one of the Gordons.

"I was mentioning you, Gabrielle, to our rector, one day, and he seemed to have heard great things of your cousin James. He said that he had written an exceedingly clever book. I suppose you know all about it?"

"Oh yes."

She went off into a dream over the "Four Essays," and the evening when she saw it first, and her talk with James. Then passed to the lecture, and Mr. Savill, and her little congratulatory burst—and thought how he had pressed her hand, and had said, "Thank you, Gabrielle," and how his tone had thrilled through her—

"Good gracious me, my dear Gabrielle! 'Ow habsent you are! When do you mean to answer?"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Barber. Were you speaking? I am very rude."

"Oh no, my love. I know you and your ways, or ought to. I merely asked, was Mr. Gordon engaged?"

"No, he is not," replied Gabrielle, in a tone meant to discourage further questioning.

But Mrs. Barber did not understand tones.

"Lor me! You don't say so. What a catch! And so 'andsome too! I saw him when he came to your poor father's funeral, and I shall never forget him, I'm sure. Mrs. Simpson saw him too, and she and me have often said what a splendid-looking fellow he was. Such eyes! and such a presence! and such a nose! Goodness gracious, Gabrielle! if I had been you, I should have fallen in love, long ago, with that nose."

"Should you?" said Gabrielle, smiling faintly.

"I'm certain of it. But you are the most unsusceptible little mortal! You always were; and all the better for you—living in the 'ouse with that good-looking young man. Bless me! And then he's so tall too. I do like 'ight in a man. Nothing like 'ight, say I, for giving an air. Why, he must be—how tall, Gabrielle?"

"He is six feet three, I believe," said Gabrielle. She rose as she spoke.

"I think, if you would excuse me a little while, I should like to go, quite alone, to the church-yard, and see—" Tears choked her words; and Mrs. Barber was all sympathy and warmth in a moment.

"Go, my dear, by all means," she said, her manner completely changed; "this is the best time you could choose. The people will be at their dinners, and you'll meet no one. Stay, let me fetch your things."

But this offer Gabrielle declined. She had left her note to James in her room, and she dared not trust it to the common letter-box, which stood on the hall-table, and which was emptied, every evening, by Mrs. Barber herself. She passed out at the back door, the shortest way to the church-yard. A pillar-post stood near. She looked cautiously round; then, seeing no one, dropped her letter into the hole. After that she breathed more freely.

"It is over," she said to herself; "it may be cold, or false, or heartless. I cannot alter it now."

She entered the church-yard through a side gate. At a little distance—the trees meeting over it as of yore—was the gate used by the rectory household, Sunday after Sunday, for generations. Close beside it stood the rectory itself—the northern windows looking down upon the graves. And here the old church reared its gray walls, a tuft of moss studding them in places—a swallow's nest or two in the belfry-window—all just as she remembered. There was no change, save in the human lives whose home those scenes had been.

On the south side, in the shadow of the vestry-door, she found that which she sought. A still green grave, with a marble head-stone, bearing the name of Gabrielle, the beloved wife of Robert Wynn, rector of that parish, who died June 18, 18—, aged twenty-three years; also of the said Robert Wynn, who died November 20, 18—, aged fifty-four years.

A rook was cawing overhead. The autumnal breeze was stirring in the leaves of the old elms. Beyond this, all was silence. The dead slept quietly. No movement, no voice, betokened that beneath those crowded mounds lay forms which had walked the earth as men and women. Gabrielle knelt upon the turf, rested her head against the marble tombstone, and pondered.

"The fashion of this world passeth away," she read on a neighboring monument.

"Passeth away." It was all a pageant, then. Not her father's life only; not only the lives of those who slumbered around him; but also her own life. She must go as they had gone. Her loves, her sorrows, her hopes, her fears, her wishes, must one day be as theirs.

Yes, it was all a pageant. But a pageant with a celestial meaning. This thought shone suddenly on her soul, like a ray from heaven. A story, written as we write for children, to teach and to exemplify. An alphabet—the key to higher study. A book of emblems. The tea

burst forth again, but they were tears of peace. God was sending to her comfort. For the moment, she saw this world as nothing, and its joys as nothing, and its griefs as nothing; and, beyond, she caught a glimpse of the eternal world—of a home incorruptible.

Such inspirations do dawn, sometimes, from the depths of a great sorrow. They fade too soon: but their memory remains, a holy influence evermore.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopped, impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones—

With willing sport to the wild ocean."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

JAMES—although his acquaintances were legion—was not a man of many friends. In fact, he had, in all his life, formed only one great friendship: which had begun at Eton, and had been cemented by three years of continual intercourse at Trinity. George Raynton, the object of this friendship, was, when James first knew him, a clever, somewhat a cynical boy; and he afterward grew up into a clever, somewhat cynical young man. He had always seconded, and had helped, in some degree, to form, the contemptuous opinions entertained by James, on the subject of love and matrimony. James did not, therefore, expect that, immediately upon leaving Cambridge, Raynton would fall in love himself, and marry—most imprudently—six weeks later. Such, however, proved to be the case. The bride was a girl fresh from school—an empty-headed girl, vain and frivolous—a beauty, certainly, but no more. Raynton was set down by all his friends—James foremost—as infatuated!

And Raynton had made no such effort as James was at present making, to liberate himself from the snare. His opinions changed with his desires. He announced, and, as he believed, justified, this circumstance to James, in a letter: the date whereof James indignantly erased, and inscribed in its place, "Fool's Paradise." Moreover, since he would not hear of a long, or even of a moderate engagement, he resigned the Trinity fellowship which he had just, to his pride and glory, gained; resigned likewise—not possessing the wherewithal for married life in England—all his home prospects, his old friends, his country: and emigrated to Australia. And this he did,

not only with perfect indifference, but with perfect cheerfulness: simply because, as James, in scorn, soliloquized, he carried with him a woman—and a silly woman. James officiated, superciliously, as best man at the wedding; and returned home doubly, trebly, fixed in his own stoical resolutions. "Never—no, never—would he show himself such a fool!"

Since that period, three years had elapsed; and the friends had heard little of one another. In fact, a coolness had arisen between them; for Raynton was well aware of James's sentiments: to which, indeed, the recollection of days gone-by afforded him an easy key. But, early in this September, James had received from him a letter, written warmly, even affectionately, and announcing his return, with his wife and two children to England: thanks to a legacy which had fallen to them in the nick of time. He had bought a small property in Yorkshire, and it was probable that business connected with it would shortly take him into the neighborhood of Rotherbridge: when he hoped to call upon James.—And it so happened that, on the very morning of Gabrielle's departure, some few hours later, Raynton appeared; and remained at Farnley until the following day. This meeting vividly revived in James's mind old times—the times when he and Raynton, wandering arm in arm, about their Cambridge or Etonian haunts, had shared the feast of reason, and the flow of soul; had drawn Utopian pictures of life; had solved, to their mutual satisfaction, all the great social problems, and had interchanged opinions on every topic which they judged worthy of an opinion at all. Perhaps Raynton, like himself, would willingly have lived those times again. Much, at any rate, of their cordiality was now renewed; and all differences were forgotten.

James, however, was not slow to perceive that a change had come over the young Benedict. Not the enervating, the effeminating change which James would have anticipated: but one exactly its opposite. Raynton's face had always been characterized by a dash of cynicism; it was now a cynical face. He sneered continually, moreover; and his manner had a tinge of im-roseness.

"Let me see, Gordon—" he said, as, his visit ended, James was driving him to the station; "when and where did we meet last? Oh! at my wedding, I recollect. What a state I was in, by George! and what an awful ass you thought me!"

"I thought that you were awfully in love."

"Ay, a synonyme. I have often recalled our old theories. We used to talk wonderful bosh! I suppose you have outgrown it all by this time? Nothing like experience for clearing away cobwebs of that kind!"

"You have the advantage of me, there, remember," said James, a little stiffly.

"Well, that's true, certainly"—a sneer; "and then I'm a year or two the elder. However, your enlightenment will come—no fear!—if it hasn't come yet. Only wait till you fall in love, my good fellow."

"Once fall in love, and adieu to reason. So it seems to me."

"Adieu to reason for two months or so, I grant you—till you've been married two months or so. Not one moment longer. Why, man, 'tis an enchantment, such as we read of in the fairy tales. If it lasted, there would scarcely be a sane man in the nation. But, luckily, it don't last. No, Gordon; my precept, founded on practice, is: if you fall in love, marry as soon as you can; and you'll soon come to your senses."

"But what do you call coming to your senses?" said James. "The first heat passes off, no doubt; but there's something deeper underneath: and, where that is of the right sort, it gets a hold of you, becomes a living principle. Then what is the result? Two-thirds of the married men in England are absorbed in domestic interests. Their joys and their sorrows are shut up in a circle, comprised of a woman and a set of children! How can we expect our nature to rise, how can we hope to do any thing great in the world, under such circumstances?"

"You forget that I am a married man myself," said Raynton, with a sardonic smile.

James hastened to apologize. He had, in fact, forgotten Raynton's identity. He had spoken as ~~answering~~, striving to quell, a voice in his own breast.

"Never mind excuses, I'm not offended," said Raynton, still smiling; "I feel myself in no wise rebuked. I may be a married man; but I am not such a married man as you describe. Sometimes I almost wish I were!—I might be better off. What you say is very true, no doubt, in the majority of instances; but it never will, and never can, be true with respect to you or to me. We are not made of the gentle, plastic stuff that forms domestic characters."

"But don't you find that such continual intercourse with a woman's mind has a tendency to weaken your own—to draw it down—"

"To her level? Thank goodness, I don't;"

and Raynton laughed, loud and long. "My dear Gordon, this only shows how much, or how little, you know of a woman's mind! Are you afraid to trust yourself with your sister's children, lest you should catch their partiality for ninepins?"

"Come, come, Raynton, that's going a little too far," interrupted James, some jealous care for Gabrielle flushing his cheek, and rendering his tone indignant.

"Well! you need not look so furious. Far be it from me to disparage 'lovely woman!' Women are angels, one and all; 'we should be brutes without ye,' is my unfeigned sentiment. But, to make a compromise with your literalness, would your wife hesitate to trust herself with her children? If not, neither need you hesitate to trust yourself with your wife. This, at any rate, is a just analogy."

He paused, sneering to himself.

"I'll tell you what it is, Gordon—before you're married. You go into society, and there the dear creatures are, dressed out and beautified. They sing sweetly, and they play enchantingly, and they dance elegantly; and, since they usually get themselves up in a smattering, at least, of the leading topics of the day, they contrive, many of them, to talk sensibly; or, anyhow, to evince a good deal of pretty curiosity. Then they are so agreeable, smile on you so amiably, are so flattered by your notice, that—to say nothing of their eyes, their noses, etc.—you feel quite captivated. You go home, and you think: 'Dear me! what a fascinating thing a woman is!' Then you—you, *par excellence*—think further: 'This is an influence which I must resist. If I resigned myself to it, it would absorb me, and shut out higher things. I should soon be enthralled, degraded;' and, accordingly, you avoid them henceforth.

"Now, if, instead of argufying, and fighting against your nature, you obeyed it, like a sensible man, and took one of the sweet charmers home to be your every-day companion, you would soon find that it was a case of 'much ado about nothing.' Either your eyes grow accustomed to the glitter, or the glitter itself vanishes; any way, it ceases to dazzle; and out she comes, her plain, unvarnished self. If, after this, you feel yourself in any danger from her influence, I'm sorry for you! As to the affection, and so forth, that flows on (I suppose) imperceptibly. You go your way, and she goes hers. 'Tis a pleasant change, now and then, to meet—at meals, and that. And when you want amusement, there's her chatter, always ready; when you want a shirt mended, she'll do it. On the whole, a wife is a

convenient thing. So my advice to every young bachelor is: marry. If you expect a Paradise, you'll be disappointed; but no more so than you deserve, perhaps, for expecting Paradise in a woman," and Raynton sighed. "Besides, the disappointment will be gradual; so, Paradise or not, marry. If you are sentimentally inclined, marry; 'twill soon cure you. Above all, if you are high-flown, despise love, and the like, marry; you'll see the rights of it then."

James was silent. In these predictions—about the glitter fading, and so forth—there was something that strangely jarred upon his present tone of mind. He could not bear, in spite of all, to think that Gabrielle would ever appear to him less sweet, less attractive, less worthy of all love and reverence, than she appeared to him now. Was he softened, or was Raynton hardened? He could not tell. He only knew that he shrank from Raynton's cynicisms as from a shower of frozen water, with a feeling which, in others, he had always stigmatized as sickly and sentimental—a feeling of being misunderstood, thrown back upon himself.

Nevertheless, as, after Raynton's departure, he drove home, he found himself seriously pondering Raynton's experiences, and comparing them with his own. Raynton had been desperately in love; so was he. Raynton had cooled, had recovered his senses; so might he. The gratification, not the denial, of his desires, had effected Raynton's cure; might not the gratification, not the denial, of his desires, be, after all, the cure for him? To be sure, Mrs. Raynton was no Gabrielle; but James doubted whether this were any thing to the point. He remembered that Raynton, at the time of his marriage, was as devoted to, as enthusiastic about, his wife, as though she had been the most angelic creature on earth; and he had further observed to James that "superior women" were not in his line. Was it not the way of a fire to burn itself out, if unopposed? whereas obstacles feed it like fuel. Might it not be as Raynton had said: that this passion of love was a temporary madness—something which must be gone through, more or less, by every man, and then put by forever?

And, on the other hand, this contest—what was it but a prolongation of the madness? This continual perturbation, this restless pain—could the peaceful effeminacy that he had dreaded be more injurious to the mind? The perturbation might certainly calm down in time; the pain might subside into a quiet heartache, wearing but endurable; such as many a man, and many

a woman, has to bear in secret, and work all the same, till death. But James was well aware that this result—never, under any circumstances, a happy result—could only be attained through long waiting. His nature was not of the kind which can admit twenty new loves in as many months, and be none the worse. It was not in him to forget, or to change. So far had he advanced in self-knowledge as to perceive that, continuing to struggle, the best years of his life would in that struggle be consumed. The best years of his life would be gone before he could gain that calm height above the reach of passion, above the storms which sway, as so many reeds, the common herd of men; whence he aspired to survey, and to pronounce upon, the events of the mighty Past; and to turn them to account, for the benefit of the Present and the Future.

Had his conflicts, then, been altogether a mistake? Had the misery that he had brought upon himself, and perhaps upon Gabrielle, been wasted? His heart misgave him; he feared—he feared—it had! Thus musing, he reached Farnley. As he entered the house, Theodosia Featherstone was crossing the hall to the drawing-room. He looked after her with a heavy sigh. Here, raised by his own hand, was an impassable barrier to every hope of return. Even supposing that he broke through this barrier, Gabrielle would never, he was sure, condescend to accept him on such terms. Indeed, he would never so insult her as to ask it.

No; he must go on now, and face the worst.

On the following morning, Gabrielle's note arrived. When James unlocked the post-bag, her envelope was the first that came to light. He hastily thrust it into his pocket; for Cissy stood at his elbow; and, biting his lip in the effort to maintain his composure, went on to empty the bag and to distribute its contents. Then—for Olivia was pouring out the tea, and The was speaking to him—he sat down in his place; opened and read his other letters, chatted, and was chatted to, as usual. Of eating he made only a feint; but, somehow or other, he lived through breakfast. This done, he approached Olivia.

"Olivia," said he, "I am going to Leeds. You had better not expect me till you see me."

"To Leeds!" exclaimed Cissy; "why?"

"I have business there," replied James, shortly. Which, in so far as a small purchase—improvised to suit the occasion—could be called business, was true; or—and this was more to the point, in so far as a business could be made

of a restless desire to get away, if only for a few hours, alone.

"Oh! do take me," cried Cissy; "I love Leeds. Dear, smoky, dirty, old place!"

"I can't take you to-day, I'm afraid, Cissy. I should not know what to do with you, and—"

"And you mean to go without me. You're an unsociable monster," said Cissy, turning away.

He made no attempt to excuse himself; departed forthwith—too thankful to escape on any terms; ordered his horse; and, during the brief delay which followed, took refuge in his study. He drew the little note from its hiding-place; his hand, that strong, able hand, positively trembled. He broke the seal, ran his eye over the contents; and his heart sank as low as, in all his troubles, it had sunk yet.

Well! what could he expect? he asked himself. Was it likely that she would throw herself into his arms? that she would betray her feelings to him, the heartless, egotistical flirt? But did she feel any thing? Ah! that was the point. Did she care, one way or the other?

Then his pride revolted. He wished that he had never written. He wished that he had let it alone. What a fool he had been! The hot blood mounted to the roots of his hair. He felt himself sorely humiliated.

But when, on the road to Rotherbridge, he thought the matter over, his sensations underwent a change. Gabrielle—that sweet, ingenuous child, who had won him against his will—had ever been eager in interest, ready in sympathy, quick to express either. These cold, formal sentences, coming from her, must of necessity be forced. Had she felt nothing, she would certainly have said more. . . For a moment, amid all his self-reproach, a flash of ineffable joy gleamed on his soul. Could he but certainly know that she forgave him, that she would receive him, then—

He stopped short, remembering Miss Featherstone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"What do I hear? Is this thy vow?"

Sir James the Ross replied:

"And will Matilda wed the Grame,
Though sworn to be my bride?"

MICHAEL BRUCE.—*Old Ballad.*

In walking aimlessly about the streets of Leeds—passing beauty without observation, squalor without disgust, beggary without disgust, beggary without attention—James passed

the greater part of the day. At length he became aware that he was tired—exceedingly tired. He paused, looked at his watch. It was past five o'clock; in less than an hour his train would start. He made the best of his way back to the station.

At the counter of the refreshment-room stood a lanky gentleman, with red hair and a red countenance, in no wise remarkable for wits. He was asking, as James entered—addressing the young lady in attendance—while his great-coat slid unperceived from over his arm:

"Can you tell me the next train to Rotherbridge?"

"What is the next train to Rotherbridge, Miss Andrews?" screeched the young lady.

She was answered by a corresponding screech from regions unknown.

"That's the Rotherbridge train as is just gone; and there's not another to-night."

"Rotherbridge," the young lady screeched again. James came to the rescue—the more readily, since the lanky gentleman was none other than Lord Joseph Postlethwaite. On seeing James, he looked stupid and aghast, eyed askance his offered hand; finally, with evident reluctance, took it slowly, and shook it feebly. But not one syllable did he utter.

"The Rotherbridge train starts at six o'clock," said James—"I am going by it myself."

"Oh! Ah!" replied Lord Joseph, his color deepening. "Fact is—" and he appeared to make a tremendous effort—"fact is, Gordon, you're just exactly the fellow I wanted. I was on my way to Farnley. I have . . . I have something of importance to say to you."

"Suppose we come out on the platform?" proposed James; perceiving that the young lady was attentively listening, with every symptom of unbounded interest.

"Well!" assented Lord Joseph; "fact is—suppose we do."

And to the platform they repaired: James having first stooped to pick up the great-coat, which, by this time, had reached the ground.

"Why did you wish to see me?" he inquired, as Lord Joseph remained silent and confused.

"It isn't fair now, Gordon. 'Pon my word, it isn't."

"What isn't fair, Lord Joseph?"

"Oh, come! You know," said Lord Joseph.

"Indeed, I do not know," said James, staring.

"Everybody says so, you see; or I shouldn't have objected. I don't mind a little flirting. But, you know, when it comes to that, you know,

it is going a little too far. And everybody says so."

"Would you oblige me," returned James, "by informing me what it is that everybody says?"

"Well!" said Lord Joseph, stammering; "well! you know . . . fact is . . . I've heard from reliable quarters, that you're spoony . . . that you're making up to . . . that you and Miss . . . Miss . . ."

"Featherstone?" said James, helping him out.

"Ay—" intensely relieved—"you and Miss Featherstone. That you're talked of together, you know; that you're likely to . . . to . . . make a match of it, in fact. And that can't be right, you know—can it?—when she's engaged to . . . to . . ."

"To you?" again assisted James.

"There. You've guessed it. I haven't told you; now have I?" inquired Lord Joseph, with evident anxiety.

"No . . . no . . . you have not told me," replied James, hardly knowing what he said.

Lord Joseph again evinced himself intensely relieved.

"That's all right, then. She can't blame me. Awfully lucky! isn't it now? I should have been obliged to tell you, if you hadn't guessed. And then"—his voice sank—"she'd have been in an awful wax; might have thrown me over altogether. For I promised to say nothing about it, until she gave me leave."

"You did—did you?"

"Why, fact is, you know, I was awfully spoony. Glad to get her, you know, on any terms. And she said she couldn't possibly allow the engagement to be proclaimed at present. She said she'd consider herself bound, all the same, you know; and I might write to her, and all that. But she'd particular reasons, she said, why she wished it kept to ourselves for a month or so. Of course I didn't like it, you know; but, fact is . . . I found that I must lump it; and she begged so hard; and . . . altogether . . . you understand."

James did understand. His eyes were opened to Miss Featherstone's little game. On the principle that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, she had accepted Lord Joseph—or rather, the title and the ducal connection—while she could accept them. But, sensible at the same time, that Farnley and its riches were better worth, because more substantial, than any mere name, however glorious; and Lord Joseph, for his station was poor—she had kept the hand well closed, the bird well concealed, and had set

off to the bush, full speed. Should she succeed there, the first capture might go free. Should she fail, that, at any rate, was her own.

James saw, as he had never seen before, what manner of woman he would have taken to his heart and his home. But it was impossible, as yet, to realize his escape. Every thing seemed in a whirl.

"When did all this happen, if I may ask?" said he, as soon as he could speak.

"Why, in July, you know, in town. She was going down to your place, she said, and—fact was, I thought it as well to make sure of her, before—before . . . You perceive?"

"Oh, yes; I perceive," said James, contemptuously. "And now you were coming to take me to task for my presumption in having her at Farnley?"

"Well, fact is—no offence, you know; but everybody did say so—I thought you were . . . you know what I mean, you know, and—and—as she did happen to be engaged to me—"

"But you see I could not tell by intuition that she was engaged to you."

"No. Exactly. You couldn't. Only—only—you know how a fellow feels, Gordon, you know; and I was thinking—" said Lord Joseph, fiery red—"what an awfully good-looking chap you were, and—and—all that takes women so, and you might have any one you chose; and then to go and take advantage of it, you know, and get the one of all others, the only one I wanted—it did seem rather—rather—fact was, I felt . . . but never mind. There could be no real unfairness. I forgot, you know."

Poor Lord Joseph! It was a case of the little ewe-lamb; and he had been thoroughly frightened. Deep was his relief to feel that the worst was over; that Gordon was not offended; that the was still his own—at least it appeared so.

"I say, you know—you did flirt with her a little, I suppose; but she didn't—you haven't—it hasn't gone far enough to make her repent her engagement?"

"If I might advise," said James, "it would be better to address that question to her."

"Exactly. Of course. So it would. Still—fact is—I dare say I sha'n't see her, just yet—"

"But won't you come on with me?"

"Thanks. Very kind, I'm sure," said Lord Joseph, overwhelmed; "fact is—nothing can be kinder—but I think, you know, after telling you; I mean after talking to you; for I didn't tell you—now did I?"

"Well, no; you did not tell me, in so many words," was James's reassuring reply.

"No, I did not," echoed Lord Joseph; "but since, somehow or other, it has come out, you know, it might be as well for me to keep out of her way a little, you know."

A happy state of things, truly! However, James agreed that, perhaps—all considered—it might.

"Well, then, you'll tell me as a friend—you're an awfully good fellow, Gordon—you'll tell me as a friend: do you think, now, that she's lost her heart to you?"

There was in this question and its attendant circumstances something so ludicrous, that, despite the perturbation of James's mind, he found it exceedingly difficult to repress a smile.

"No," he said; "I do not think that Miss Featherstone has lost her heart to me." "Or to any one," was his mental reservation.

"You don't, really, now? 'Pon your honor? And—it's a great deal to ask, but I should go back in peace, and you're such a monstrous good fellow—now that you know of this, you'll be careful? In fact, you won't flirt with her any more, will you?" said Lord Joseph, in an almost beseeching tone.

"It is not my custom to poach upon other men's grounds," returned James, somewhat proudly; "that I have devoted myself rather particularly to Miss Featherstone of late, I do not deny. But, from this moment, she is nothing to me, or I to her, any more. Now, if you have said all that you wish to say, perhaps you will excuse me."

"I shall write to The, you know," said Lord Joseph, deeply grateful; "you'll tell her so, if you mention having met me? Tell her all about it, and how it was. You're an awfully good fellow. No offence?"

"None in the world," said James: shaking hands with a smile, interpreted by Lord Joseph as a further proof of awful goodness.

"Stop a minute," he said. He then fumbled in his pocket: dropping, in the process, innumerable things; and presently produced a cigar-case, which he extended toward James.

"Have a cigar," said he, in the fulness of his heart; "uncommon good ones. Now do have a cigar."

This token of amity closed the interview. Lord Joseph was perfectly satisfied. He retired without the station, to smoke and to chuckle.

And James?

Afterward, James found himself unable to remember where, at this time, he went, or what

he did. He was conscious only of one great truth: which filled his heart; which filled the whole world—so it seemed to him—with sudden glory.

He was free. Free from his self-imposed chains. Free to act as he would; free to love as he would.

It was as though every power within his soul arose and cried "Hallelujah!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?"

"Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat—
That Time will come and take my love away:
This thought is as a death which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

THE had been, for several hours, in a humor reverse from agreeable: so said Cissy; so thought Olivia. She was, in fact, exceedingly displeased; with the world in general, and with James in particular. What business had he to go to Leeds yesterday, and to absent himself during the greater part of to-day; leaving her alone? Alone, that was, to all intents and purposes; for the other visitors were gone: and Olivia, and Marian, and Cissy, and Sir Philip, and Lady Peers, and their children, were but as so many nothings to The. In a very short time—less than a week—she would return to her mother. She wished, while still at Farnley, to enjoy the *éclat* of an engagement, publicly proclaimed, with Farnley's lord. She was impatient to avail herself of the opportunities that would then be afforded, for setting down Cissy, for condescending to Olivia, for outrivalling Marian; and, further, for looking round upon the place and its belongings with the complacency of one who, if not exactly their owner, was, at least, their owner's queen. "*Vainqueurs des vainqueurs de la terre.*"

And thus The felt grievously provoked when Olivia observed that James would probably be absent the whole evening. She only brightened when, toward ten o'clock, the opening and shutting of doors, steps as of an arrival, and finally James's own voice, announced his return. She smoothed her hair, adjusted her bracelets, drew herself up; and glanced at her beautiful reflec-

tion in an opposite mirror. Then, changing her seat for one at a greater distance from the rest of the world, she opened a photographic album, and was speedily, to all appearance, absorbed in its contents.

At length, after what seemed an interminable time, James entered. The thought that she had never seen him look more handsome, more radiant; than to-night. He passed her chair, somewhat to her surprise, and went on to the group beyond: where he remained during several minutes, answering Olivia's questions, and chatting with her and with the rest. The waited, bending over the photographs. And presently—she was looking down, but she knew the moment when he began to move—presently he crossed the room, and seated himself upon an ottoman at her side. For one moment, The was contented. But when he spoke—which he did immediately, without any preamble of eloquent silence—she almost started at the tone of his voice. It was so cold; so coldly polite!

"Miss Featherstone," he said, "I have to congratulate you on a very pleasant piece of news, which I heard yesterday."

Miss Featherstone's blood ran cold. The drawback, the one drawback to her joyful anticipations, expanded beyond her utmost fears. The cloud, no longer a tiny cloud, loomed black and threatening before her. She smiled, however, and answered with composure:

"Oh, certainly. But I have no idea, all the same, of what this piece of news may be."

"Indeed? Pray allow me to wish you every happiness in your engagement to Lord Joseph Postlethwaite."

The drawback had turned into a thunder-bolt, the cloud had burst. Farnley was gone forever. The felt herself completely taken aback. Her eyes sank; a guilty blush dyed her cheeks. James saw that his suspicions had in no degree transcended the truth. Never, on any mortal countenance, were shame and mortification more plainly blended.

But only for a second. Her presence of mind speedily revived. The blush still hot upon her face, she rallied her forces, resolved, since retreat she must, to retreat with dignity.

"Mr. Gordon, what do I hear? You have seen him? He has told you?"

"I met him at Leeds. He wished me to explain that he did not, in so many words, actually tell me," said James, his lip curling with a smile which The thoroughly understood. "To confess the truth, he was on his way here, but—"

"Oh yes! do, do let me know the whole truth. Hide nothing. Why did he not come?"

"He changed his mind," replied James, significantly, "after seeing me."

The asked no more questions. "Mr. Gordon," she said, in a confidential tone, accompanied by considerable play of the lovely eyes—"Mr. Gordon, I must request, as a personal favor, that you will not mention this affair to anybody until I give you leave. I may tell you—so old a friend—that Joseph and I have been attached to one another all this year, and engaged since July."

"So he said," observed James, coolly. She felt that her confidences were repulsed.

"There were reasons—reasons too private to be revealed even to you—which, much against my will, obliged me, for the first two months, to require secrecy. And even now, until I have had a personal interview with mamma, the engagement ought not to be proclaimed. Joseph was impetuous. He forgot himself. But I shall write and beg him to wait patiently a few days longer. It can be only a few days. I rejoin mamma on Monday, you know."

"All right, then," said James; "up to Monday I will keep it a rigid secret. But mind! I promise no more. Monday over, I shall consider myself at liberty to speak and to delight Olivia, who always is delighted to hear of an engagement of any kind!"

"Of any kind, indeed!" thought Miss Featherstone, furiously, but she kept her fury to herself, only too thankful to secure her point. It would be more than enough of a bad thing should her engagement be proclaimed for the first time at Farnley. Once out of the house, she could afford to snap her fingers at the Gordons and their opinions, but in it she felt a wholesome awe of the censorious eyes—perhaps speeches—even of that spiteful Cissy, that stupid Marian, and that dry Olivia.

"I only trust," she said presently, "that my interview with mamma may terminate well. If, after all, she should object—"

"Oh, no fear of that, I should think," said James, in a reassuring tone. "What objection could there possibly be, you know? Besides, she would overlook a thousand objections where your happiness is so deeply concerned. And then consider: if Lord Darcy and Lord Henry were to die (Lord Henry had a bad cold when I saw him last)—and if Lord Darcy's boys died also, and the old duke—"

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Miss Featherstone, peevishly, "do you suppose that mamma is an idiot?"

As for me," she added, growing pathetic, "I am thankful to say that my happiness is not dependent upon outward grandeur. Love is the true grandeur after all," and she sighed.

But in a corner of the bright dark eyes which met, with no adoring gaze, her blue ones, she detected a furtive twinkle. The mouth, too, seemed inclined to break into a smile, and not a complimentary smile. She thought it as well to rise, and, having repeated her adjurations of secrecy, to fly for refuge to Olivia and Marian.

Her spirits quickly rose to the emergency. The disappointment, though bitter, might have been more bitter; the "one bird," at least, was secure, and she returned a gracious note of pardon to the abject apologies which arrived by post on the following morning. Her real sentiments, together with the righteous punishment which the unfortunate bird had incurred, were reserved until such a time as Miss Theodosia Featherstone should become the Lady Joseph Postlethwaite.

The engagement was a nine-days' wonder—not only at Farnley, but whithersoever the breezes of gossip had wafted the story of the last few weeks. The Gordons were quite beset by visitors, kindly desirous to ascertain for themselves how that poor ill-used young man bore the blow; and deep was the secret disappointment of many when, they found that he bore it uncommonly well. In more than one case pity gave place to anger, and James was set down as an accomplished flirt.

But nobody was so much astonished as Olivia. Perfectly inexplicable! she repeated, a hundred times a day; to herself, to Marian, to Cissy. Perfectly inexplicable! Her trust in James, however, remained unshaken. She was very severe on The; but James was beyond suspicion. She did not know how it could be; she did not understand; but she felt sure that he had acted for the best—for what he thought the best. No; Cissy had always been unjust to James. Cissy must hold her tongue.

Easier said than enforced. Cissy was exceedingly displeased that he should prosper so well, when he deserved to prosper so ill. "Now"—she thought to herself—"all will go smoothly. He will make up to Gabrielle, directly she comes home. Gabrielle, like a little fool, will be delighted, and will instantly accept him. Bells will ring, flags will fly, every thing will come right; and he will be very happy ever after. Whereas poor Mr. Godfrey, for whom nothing would be too good, must give up all; resign himself to his fate, and settle down, with no one to

care about him, or comfort him, at that lonely Meddiscombe. Oh dear! oh dear! what a shame it is!"

And Cissy positively stamped.

A day or two after this soliloquy, James happened to enter the school-room; and seeing that Cissy was writing, and that an envelope addressed to "Miss Wynn" lay beside her on the table, he lingered—taking the envelope in his hand, and toying with it absently.

"Well!" said Cissy, in a sharp tone; "what do you want? Please leave my envelope alone. I shall be ashamed to send it, if you crumple it like that; and then I shall have the trouble of directing another."

"You are writing to Gabrielle, I suppose," said James.

"The address is before you, Mr. Hypo—James, I mean."

"She is coming back soon; is she not?" He walked to the window, and looked out.

"On Tuesday, I believe. What of that?"

"What of that, Cissy! cantankerous child! Pray have I offended you in any way? Because, if I have, I beg most humbly to apologize."

"Oh, dear no, thank you"—with supreme contempt; "your goings on are no concern of mine, to offend or to please me. All I ask is, leave me alone, and let me finish my letter."

"What can you find to say, Cissy? You are beginning a second sheet; and nothing in the world has happened since you wrote last."

"How do you know when I wrote last, sir? Go off to your Plato, or which ever of the ancients best teaches the art of minding one's own business."

"No; I shall stay here, and suggest subjects," said James, establishing himself on the window-sill. "Have you enlightened her as to the progress of Marian's dresses?"

"No, I haven't. That's reserved for the postscript—the *bon mot*."

"Have you told her about Gypsy's hurting his tail?"

"Yes, I began with that, to let her know the worst at once. Oh, James! dear—or rather, worthless—James! do go; and leave me in peace."

"Oh, by-the-by, Cissy: there's this engagement. That really is a piece of news, now. You must tell her that."

"Oh ho!" thought Cissy: "I knew there was something. How fortunate that I had not begun the story! I was just on the point of it; and I should have had to scratch it out."

"No"—aloud: "I don't intend to tell her, now; and I have begged Olivia not to tell her either. I mean to meet her at the station, and have the fun of relating it, as we drive home."

"Can you bear to wait so long, Cissy? Five whole days, you know; rather more."

"James, if you bother so, you will drive me to my own room; and that would be most ungallant."

"But I really can't get over your wonderful patience."

"Can't you? Why? Is there any thing so very surprising in the affair? If The Featherstone is engaged, are not girls engaged every day? Gabrielle's own parents were engaged once upon a time, I conclude; so she must know that such things as engagements exist. And why should she take a peculiar interest in this one?"

"Now for my part, I should think it more amusing to tell her at once. It would give her time to digest it; and talking it over afterward, would be all the better fun."

"No doubt," said Cissy; "and she would be put out of her anxiety—wouldn't she?—the sooner: her anxiety about dear Lord Joseph, I mean; for she saw his devotion in the spring. And she would also have time to prepare for consequences; *alias*, the wedding: for of course we shall all be invited. And, moreover, to make up her mind as regarded them; in other words, to decide whether she would go or not. But still, my dear James—*have* I suddenly changed into a zebra, or any thing odd of that kind, that you should stare at me so?—still, my dear James, on the whole, I think it advisable to defer this weighty intelligence, till we meet. Further, to retire to my own room, to finish my letter.

'Fare thee weel, my ain Jeames,
Mine ears pant to be free, Jeames,'

and your tongue, it seems, pants to talk; so we shall never agree."

And away, with writing-case, envelope, and paper, swept Cissy: turning before she closed the door, to make a sweeping courtesy to James. He bit his lip in vexation, and wished that he had not lowered himself to speak to Cissy on the subject. But often, in his own opinion, did James lower himself now.

He had hit, however, as he believed, upon a happy expedient, whereby the desires of his heart, and the desires of his mind, might at length be equally gratified. Marriage, he assured himself, would be to him, as to Raynton, a composing draught. In marrying Gabrielle—

on which, if she would accept him, he was fully resolved—he should merely postpone, not resign, the final victory; substituting treaty for war. In a year's time, he might fairly expect to be his own man again; free to devote his whole heart and mind and soul and strength to the higher purposes to which they had long been dedicated: in other words—words that, had they occurred to him, might have suggested a few unpalatable truths—to the exclusive worship of Intellect, his god.

In a year's time. He would be systematic, and allot to himself one year: to date from the era of his engagement. One year, to be consecrated to her, and to her alone; one year to enjoy, to his heart's content, her society and her affection. Then back, without a murmur, to that sterner but grander life, the life of his dreams. Love her, he always must. Protect her, he always would. But rest in her, be a Mark Antony to her: never.

Thus he determined; and then, throwing away the curb, freely resigned himself to the throng of hopes and fears and wishes which had so long been kept in abeyance. In these days, he lived but in the longing to be once more with Gabrielle. He could settle to nothing. He could neither eat, nor sleep, nor read. It was worse than longing: it was hunger; it was a consuming thirst. At last, the day of her arrival dawned. A few more hours, and he would stand, please God, in her presence.

They were all assembled at breakfast: he, Olivia, Marian, and Cissy. Sir Philip and Lady Peers had gone to pay a few visits in the neighborhood; whence they would only return in time for Marian's wedding.

"The letters are late," observed Olivia.

"'Parlez du soleil, et vous en verrez les rayons'—a truly Parisian rendering of our vulgar old proverb!" said Cissy, as Wilcox entered, handing the bag to James.

"There are not many, this morning," said James, unlocking it: "Olivia, one—" he shot it across the table: "Marian, two—no, Cissy, none for you; and, what a marvel! only papers for me."

He threw the bag aside, and turned to Marian, who was calling upon him to decipher some almost illegible word in her letter. They bent over it together.

"Dear! dear! how very unfortunate! My poor Gabrielle!" suddenly exclaimed Olivia, from behind the urn. James stopped short in the middle of a sentence; and started as though he had been shot.

"What is the matter?" cried Cissy, really alarmed, for Olivia's countenance was portentous; "from whom is that letter?"

"From Mrs. Barber. My poor dear little Gabrielle!"

"Here: read it aloud or give it to me—one or the other," said James. Cissy glanced at him; he was almost colorless.

"I will read it," said Olivia, and began.

"EVERSFIELD, Monday.

"MY DEAR MISS GORDON:

"I am sure that you will pardon the liberty I take in addressing you, when I affirm that it is for Gabrielle's sake. I will consequently waive apologies, and commence my tale forthwith. On her arrival here, both Mr. Barber and self were shocked by the delicacy of her appearance. She has subsequently been laid up with a cold on the chest; which, although it has now yielded to the remedies (mustard-plasters, etc.) applied, has left her more feeble than previous; and the utmost care is required. You may not—since the connection is on her lamented father's side—be aware that nearly all her mother's family died of consumption, including the mother herself; and Mr. Barber, who has known Gabrielle from a child, and who attended several of her relations in their progress to the tomb, regrets to observe in her more than one symptom similar to those which preceded their premature decay."

"Were you aware of this hereditary tendency, Olivia?" interrupted James, his voice half choked.

"Not in the least," said Olivia, flushed and dismayed; "her mother died so long ago—and we heard nothing, that I remember, of the circumstances. But just let me finish."

"Mr. Barber has applied the stethoscope, and begs me to say that—"

At this juncture, Cissy, by some unlucky movement, contrived to overturn the cream-jug; the contents of which were pretty equally distributed between the carpet and her own dress. Olivia instantly jumped up, and flew, with spoon and napkin, to arrest the dangerous stream. James also started to his feet, but from a different cause. The letter was crumpled in Olivia's hand. That ominous sentence was unfinished. What had Mr. Barber begged her to say? Death or life?

"Olivia, leave that alone, and go on reading!" came the next moment, in a thundering voice.

Well might Olivia drop the napkin, and stare. Well might Marian stare likewise. But what cared James?

"Go on!" he repeated.

Olivia, instinctively obedient, forsook cream; and did go on.

"—begs me to say that, although her are in an exceedingly delicate state, there yet, no disease."

"Thank God for that!" said James, hoarse and strode from the room.

His sisters, in wondering consternation, him cross the hall, open the door, and go on

"Why, one might think that he was in with Gabrielle!" said Marion.

"So one almost might!" said Cissy, innocent

But Olivia, perplexed and sad, said no. Her eyes were opened at last.

"Olivia, what can be done? You see, end of the letter, Mrs. Barber recommends and vigilance and cod-liver oil, as if they were to be mixed together;" and Cissy laughed mockingly; "but I thought that there was any hope for people in whom consumption hereditary, when they get into a delicate state this."

"Oh, Cissy! Yes; there is always; though, often, I fear, but little," said Olivia, cheeks wet with tears; "however, all that we can do, we will do; and we must try to be useful, and to make the very best of it to the child herself, when she comes."

"And she knows nothing: did you read postscript? Here it is. Olivia, listen. Such words, too!"

"P. S.—Both my husband and self have it a point to betray no alarm in Gabrielle's case. I believe the dear girl to be totally aware of her critical condition: the more she is ignorant of the consumptive tendency of her family. Her late lamented parent was sensitive on the subject; and took every precaution to guard her from the sad knowledge. has been told that her mother's illness was lingering kind; but nothing more: and when last survivor of her lamented uncles and departed this life, she was too young to understand the fell disease which destroyed them."

"Olivia, what was the last survivor? A uncle, or an aunt, or what? I can't quite get out, from the letter."

"Cissy, this is no subject for ridicule."

"My dear Olivia! I'm far too good-natured to ridicule any one. But seriously, I see vision, a slate, a corrected copy, a Johnson's Dictionary, and a 'Crabbe's Synonyms.' Here back the glorious result."

She tossed the letter into Olivia's lap; shook her finger in Olivia's reproachful face; ran away up-stairs to her own room, locked the door: and cried as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Lift up thankful eyes, my sweet!
Count equal, loss and gain;
Because, as long as the world lasts,
Green leaves will come again."

DINAH MARIA MULOCK.

GABRIELLE bade farewell to Eversfield, prepared, as she believed, for the worst; but in a state of mind far different from that in which she had quitted Farnley. She had then been restless, passionate, rebellious—chafing and fretting under the yoke of pain and disappointment which seemed appointed for her. She had felt her trial, then, to be greater than she could bear. She had almost felt it to be unjust.

But as she returned, these murmuring thoughts were stilled. She was no more hopeful; but she was more resigned. The invisible world, and all connected with it, were very real and present to her; the visible world, and all connected with that, had decreased in her esteem. In fact, she had quite done with earth, she thought. She was contented—now—to serve out her apprenticeship, to work out her work, to the end; and peace might come, in time. But joy she could not expect again, this side the grave. She must study the art of living without joy; of waiting patiently for the best joy—the joy of heaven.

Nevertheless, as the shrill whistle proclaimed the vicinity of Rotherbridge, her heart beat fast; and faster still when the train steamed slowly into the station, and she caught a glimpse of the Farnley carriage, waiting in the street outside. The august Wilcox himself stood on the platform; ready, the instant that the train stopped, to open the door. How Farnley-like, already, every thing looked! The Eversfield world seemed a thousand miles away.

"We are to call at Bradley's, if you please, ma'am, to take up Miss Cicely."

Gabrielle's face brightened. This was a pleasant surprise; and so thoughtful and kind in Cissy! She would now be spared the trial of hearing, for the first time, all that there might be to hear, in the publicity of the family circle; from Olivia, or from Marian: together with the agony of self-command which such an ordeal would have involved. She leaned back among the cushions,

and endured her suspense, until Bradley's shop was reached. Then the carriage drew up; and Cissy appeared, radiant with smiles.

Beneath the smiles, however, Gabrielle detected a touch of unusual tenderness, of commiseration. Until this moment, she had not known how much of hope still lingered in her heart. But now even these poor remains vanished, and left a dead blank.

"I have quantities to tell you," said Cissy. "But I must wait till we get out of this worrying town. The clatter drowns my voice. By-the-by, Gabrielle, my dear, I hope you know to what a stupid party you are returning? An interesting quintet we shall be, till Marian's wedding."

"The wedding is very near now."

"Yes; the twenty-fifth is galloping on: or perhaps I ought to say, sailing on, in compliment to the admiral. And we are to have such a bustle! I suppose Marian thinks that, as she is making one splash, she had better make two (a very vulgar pun, Gabrielle!). So eighty people are coming to the breakfast, and a grand dance, not to say a ball, is to follow in the evening. I hate the idea of the fuss; and so does Olivia. But Marian opines, that since weddings come but once a life—at least, we can't count on them oftener—she may as well do the thing handsomely."

"And where will they go afterward?"

"To the lakes for a fortnight. The admiral wants to see what fresh water is like, I suppose. Then back to Farnley, a flying visit of three or four days. Then off to the dear Mediterranean: the only part which excites my envy."

Thus, clatter notwithstanding, went Cissy's tongue, until the town was passed. Then, when they had entered upon the still autumnal lanes, where the leaves were falling silently, and the bustle of the world seemed far removed, she drew nearer to Gabrielle, and hugged her tight.

"It is so nice to have you again, you dear, darling thing! I have missed you dreadfully. But before we talk about that, you must hear a grand piece of news. Can you guess it?"

A mist came before Gabrielle's eyes, a singing in her ears. She did not know how she answered; but she supposed, by another question: for, the next moment, Cissy was replying:

"No, it does not concern us: not at least directly. It concerns a young lady—some one whom we know very well."

"Some one whom you like, Cissy?"

"'Like,' my dear! 'Like' is not the word. Say dote upon, rather. The news is a great blow to me; she might have done so much better.

Though, as to that, it would be impossible, perhaps, to find a suitable match for her: peerless creature!"

"Oh! an engagement: I see now. But I can't guess, Cissy. You must tell me. It is not yourself, of course?"

"And why 'of course,' pray? You alarm me, Gabrielle. I wish we were at home! I'd rush to my glass at once. It might be—nothing more probable—myself and Mr. Morris. However, it is not. It is The Featherstone and the illustrious Lord Joseph Postlethwaite; and they are to be made bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh, on the twentieth of November, at St. George's, Hanover Square. No place less grand, of course, could do the thing properly. The preliminary steps were taken on Saturday, in the *Times*, in a paragraph headed, 'Marriages in High Life.' Would not The's eyes gloat over that! I wonder whether she sent it up herself!"

All this, and much more, equally sensible, Cissy said, in order that Gabrielle might have time to compose herself and her ideas. At first, she grew so pale, that Cissy felt considerably frightened. But presently, and in double measure, the color returned; and she asked with wonderful calmness:

"How did the engagement begin? Did Lord Joseph come to Farnley?"

Then Cissy, greatly to her own satisfaction, related all that she knew of the affair; and, moreover, went on, with certain pickings and cullings, to describe the scene which, that morning, had transpired at breakfast. This—in her own opinion, very cleverly—she contrived, without either denying or revealing the real purport of Mrs. Barber's letter. Mrs. Barber, she said, had written to report on Gabrielle's health; and had mentioned the stethoscopic examination. She then told the story of the interruption to the sentence which recorded its favorable result: and Gabrielle suspected nothing further. Olivia and James—added Cissy, by way of *finale*—had been shut up half the morning, in private confab: whence Olivia had come beaming with significance.

Gabrielle heard to the end in silence. She sat silent still, when the tale was finished. Her hands clasped together, her eyes fixed and a little dilated, she looked and felt half-stunned.

"It is a dream. It is a dream. I shall wake soon," she was repeating, mechanically, in her thoughts.

"To tell you the truth"—said Cissy, after a long pause—"though I can't pretend to penetrate

his motives, I never did really believe in James's devotion to The. He looked quite a different being, when he came down to breakfast, the morning after his expedition to Leeds. I did not know why, until The was gone, and he told us of her engagement: then I understood. There is a good deal of mystery, as regards that, Gabrielle; but, as regards you, it is all very plain. And I can't resist one hint. This is a charming opportunity for a little wholesome discipline, not to say chastisement: which—next to inflicting the same myself—I shall esteem it my highest privilege to see inflicted. If you wish to prove your gratitude to me, for my good-natured communications, behold the means! I only wish I could step into your shoes, for one day—or even for one hour. I should not fail, I assure you, to get the very fullest value out of them."

Gabrielle tried to laugh; but she could not speak. Her cousin saw it, and relapsed into silence. Ere long, they turned in at the Farnley gates. The park was in great beauty, just now; the autumnal tints had reached their height of loveliness: and at this particular moment, the rich glow of the October sunset was investing all things with a radiance which seemed less of earth than of heaven. Gabrielle gazed, and felt it to be a type of the glow which had burst upon her heart. One brief hour ago, her prospects had seemed to be blighted, like the leaves. But now, suddenly, even for this world, had light and life returned.

As the carriage stopped in front of the house, the hall-door was hurriedly opened. On the threshold appeared Olivia; and, at her elbow, Marian. And Olivia looked so glad. Oh, what a happy coming home this was!—a coming home, indeed.

"Here we are—all safe and sound!" cried Cissy, from the carriage-window.

"Here you are!" was echoed from the steps; and, a minute later, Gabrielle was in the hall, being kissed and welcomed.

"How tired you seem, my dear child! you must come to my room and rest." And to Olivia's room, accordingly, they all repaired. Gabrielle was installed in a great arm-chair, and here she lay back, smiled, and answered questions: while the sisterhood sat and looked at her. She listened continually for James's footsteps, nerving herself to meet him with due composure. But he did not come; and at length Olivia declared that she could see it was too much—the dear child was so tired: she must go to her own bedroom, and lie down on her own sofa, quite alone.

There, by slow degrees, in the solitude and silence, Gabrielle realized that what she had heard, although most wonderful, most unexpected, was no dream; that a turn in the tide of her affairs had come; that God had blessed her—so said her heart—exceeding abundantly, above all that she had asked or thought.

The gong sounded. Cissy peeped into the room, and asked if Gabrielle were ready to go down. Quite ready, she answered, rising: fighting hard against an inclination to tremble. And as they turned an angle in the passage, a neighboring door opened; she found herself face to face with James.

Both colored; but Cissy was enchanted to see that James was by far the most confused of the two. He stammered, hesitated, shook hands nervously: and, in fact, his presence of mind appeared, for once, completely to desert him. Gabrielle, meanwhile, the blush excepted, betrayed no emotion of any kind. Into her always graceful manner, she now contrived to throw something of the calm yet girlish dignity by which she had been characterized, among the visitors of a few weeks back. Cissy watched in admiration; but a sharp pang shot through James's heart. Yet he thought that she had never seemed to him more lovable, more attractive, than she seemed to him now.

At the foot of the stairs they were encountered by the ever-watchful, not to say tiresome, Olivia: who, struck by Gabrielle's weary looks, insisted that she should retire to the crimson sofa, and eat her dinner there. She obeyed; and James, in the dining-room, sat silent and moody, each course more tedious than the last. Olivia spoke to him, and he returned unmeaning answers. Cissy chattered, and he thought her a bore. Marian made gentle remarks, and he paid to them no attention whatever—while Gabrielle lay alone, as on the first evening of her first arrival at Farnley; lay dreaming, and hearing, as in a dream, the various sounds: the distant clatter of dishes, now and then; the hum of voices; occasional bells; the spasmodic footsteps of the footman under the weight of the tray; Wilcox's more pompous tread; and, as a variation, the melancholy cooing of the wood-pigeons outside the window.

Then—after what seemed an interminable time—the sisters leaving the dining-room; the rustle of Olivia's silk, the flutter of Cissy's muslin. And then Olivia looked in upon her, praised her for lying still, and told her that in half an

hour she might come to the drawing-room, and talk as much as she chose.

It might have been ten minutes after this, that she heard a little knock at the door; said "Come in," all unconscious: and James entered.

James—and a sweet odor which carried her back to the spring and the bright days that she had spent in "the merry month of May." Then she saw that he had in his hand a bunch of violets. He walked straight up to the sofa, and laid them on her lap.

"Are not those sweet?" he said, drawing forward a chair, and sitting down.

"Delicious"—replied Gabrielle, drinking in the scent; "they make one forget the time of year, though; and then remembrance is rather a shock. Thank you." She extended the bunch toward him.

"Won't you have them? I gathered them for you."

So she repeated her "thank you;" and took them as he seemed to wish that they should be taken—as a little peace-offering.

An uncomfortable silence followed. Gabrielle smelled her violets; and James examined the books upon Olivia's table, opening first one, then another, and finally choosing a collection of engravings: the leaves of which he turned over, occasionally pausing to inspect some picture that he had seen at least fifty times before.

"Well, Gabrielle!" he said, at last; "and how have you enjoyed yourself?"

"The Barbers were very kind and pleasant."

A pause, and deep abstraction in a picture. Then:

"I got your note, Gabrielle."

"So I concluded," said Gabrielle, bending her head over the violets.

Another long pause.

"Cissy has told you, I suppose, about Miss Featherstone?"

"About her engagement? Yes—I was surprised."

"We were all surprised. Only think. It was going on, all the time that she was here; and Lord Joseph was corresponding with her. If I had not met him, I . . . she . . . we should not have discovered it, until . . ."

He broke off abruptly, and glanced at Gabrielle. But she was silent, not looking up.

"I never felt so thankful in my life," he went on, in a hurried manner. "That visit to Leeds was a true godsend to me."

"Indeed?" said Gabrielle.

James detected a slight, a very slight, eleva-

tion of her eyebrows. He turned again to the engravings, and said no more. The incredulity, the coldness, both of tone and countenance, cut him to the quick. He remembered the time when she had seemed to confide in him as in an oracle; when her very looks had expressed the innocent reverence in which she held him. And now, what a change! Well!—he thought, bitterly—whom had he, save himself, to thank? Yet he had imagined himself a hero; he had shown himself ready to suffer any thing, however painful—to resist any thing, however powerful—which might impede his heroic aims. How then was it that the result had been one so unworthy of a hero? That he had sunk, not in her eyes only, but also in his own?

He sighed heavily, forgetting her presence at the moment; and Gabrielle's tender heart was touched. She had felt herself compelled to be cool; but she had not meant to be unkind. However, she could not mend matters now.

"Did the Barbers think your singing improved by the lessons?"

"Mrs. Barber would not let me sing. She fancied that it was bad for my cough."

James winced perceptibly; and closed the book of engravings.

"You must take care of that cough, Gabrielle. This is a nasty time of the year to get one."

"Oh, but it is much better now, thank you," cried Gabrielle: speaking so eagerly as to bring on a troublesome fit of it.

James watched her with a pained expression. She caught his eye: and resolved to end the interview.

"I should think I might go to the drawing-room," she said, rising. "Olivia only told me to lie still for half an hour longer; and it must be over now."

"She told you to lie still? And I have been talking to you!" said James, regretfully; "I wish I had known—"

"Oh, never mind," said Gabrielle, just in the tone in which she might have told a casual acquaintance, that it was of no consequence, she assured him. Then she proceeded to the drawing-room; but James, behind her, turned off alone to his own study.

Presently the glorious tones of the chapel-organ were heard, in the Kyrie Eleison of Mozart's Twelfth Mass. James had, in the course of her organ-lessons, told Gabrielle that he often resorted to this Kyrie Eleison, when he felt disturbed in his mind—there was in it something,

to him, so full of peace. Thus, hearing it now in the distance, she understood. It was beginning for the third time, when Olivia insisted on sending her to bed.

She pitied him, of course. Nevertheless, as she lay down, her heart was full of joy. She did not attempt, at present, to explain the past, or to anticipate the future. It was enough, after all that she had suffered, to know that he did love her; that there was no one now to come between them, or to usurp her place in his heart.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"In the June twilight—in the lessening twilight—
My love cried from my bosom an exceeding bitter cry:
'Lord, wait a little longer, until my soul is stronger—
Wait till Thou hast taught me to be content to die.'"

DINAH MARIA MULLOCK.

DURING several days, Gabrielle continued, greatly to Cissy's delight, to answer James coolly, to look at him unconcernedly, to throw cold water upon his constant efforts to please her. James, however, at this time evinced himself to be of a truly persevering disposition. The first shock over, he rallied his forces, and applied himself, heart and soul, to the work of regaining what he had lost.

Every now and then a frenzy of impatience came over him; prompting him, follow what would, to end this suspense at once. But the thought of all that he might forego by such precipitancy restrained him; he calmed himself, and plodded on. His anxiety about her health was a continual torment. Mrs. Barber's letter, the hereditary doom, weighed on his mind; he could not throw them off. The weather just now was unusually fine. It was one of those genial autumns which, but for the falling foliage, might delude us into the belief that spring, forestalling winter, had returned, to give us a pleasant surprise. Gabrielle, however, did not lose her cough. It grew no worse, perhaps, but it grew no better; and no one could be long in her company without perceiving that she was very weak.

James insisted on Olivia's writing to request a visit from a certain eminent physician, specially eminent in his treatment of consumption. And although Olivia said, and the family doctor, with a suppressed smile, hinted, that in so simple a case it was scarcely necessary to send from Yorkshire to London for advice, James would take no denial. So Olivia did write, and the physician

came; and his visit, for the first time, awakened in Gabrielle's mind a suspicion that she was more than commonly delicate. Olivia, afraid of alarming her, said nothing of the distance from which he had been summoned; but Gabrielle gathered it from some speech of his own, and was startled accordingly. And—now she thought of it—how long her cough did stay on!

"Oh, I hope I am not going to die," she said to herself; "I could not bear to die!"

Where, then, was the calm indifference to this world and its concerns which she had brought from Eversfield? Where the longing after the higher world which had, at the same time, possessed her? Where, indeed? She looked at James, and her heart felt as though it would burst. How could she be resigned to leave a world where he was? Ah, she could not. It might be idolatry, but it was the truth. Heaven would scarcely be heaven to her, she thought, without him.

"He will not separate us? We have been so happy," was Charlotte Brontë's dying cry, as her husband leaned over her pillow. And thus, every year, cry many—wives, lovers, children, friends. These human ties entwine themselves so closely about our human hearts. Too often they blind our eyes to the Divine Love whence they came—the Love which is their Parent, Author of their existence—without which they could not be.

When her interview with Dr. W—— was over—when he had stethoscoped, tapped, and questioned, to his heart's content, and had bowed her out of the room—Gabrielle went quietly upstairs, and, falling on her knees at her bedside, prayed—as she had never prayed before—that she might live, and not die.

"Olivia," she said, some hours later, stealing as quietly into Olivia's room, "Olivia, what does Dr. W—— think of me? Don't keep any thing from me. I would rather hear the worst."

"My dear child," said Olivia, smiling, and laying her tating aside, "why should I keep any thing from you? You have been frightening yourself, I see—conjuring up all manner of terrible ideas. He thinks you very delicate, certainly; and he says that you require a great deal of care. But that is all; there is no disease. And he has prescribed a remedy which he believes will make you quite well and strong again."

"What is the remedy?"

"I can't tell you now. But don't look so anxious. You will hear soon, never fear. Meanwhile, dear child, remember there is nothing whatever to be alarmed about."

Gabrielle was reassured; but the drawback, the drop of bitterness which, sooner or later, finds its way into every cup of earthly joy, had found its way into hers; that cup had lost its first unsullied sweetness. From this time she began to relax in her coldness to James. The bare idea of losing him, of being snatched from him, perhaps in a few short months, and buried out of his sight, strengthened the intensity of her love, and inclined her to cling—as if that could save her—to his. So, gradually, she ceased to avoid him, and to repel him; and every day drew them nearer together.

These were bustling days for Farnley. The preparations for Marian's wedding were fast drawing to a close. The *trousseau* was ready, and lady friends continually came to feast their eyes upon it. They said they came to see Marian; but Cissy knew better. Cissy thought that the wisest plan would be to hire the national school-room, distribute the *trousseau* on nails about the walls, and advertise admission at sixpence a head—children double price, on account of their propensity to finger. The profits might go to the admiral, as a slight acknowledgment of his kindness in adopting Marian. Marian herself could walk round with a stick, and point out the best bits of lace. But Marian, even now, spent many a happy moment in ushering envious young ladies into the room where the chief treasures were enshrined. It was a continual puzzle to Gabrielle. She took a girlish pleasure in pretty dresses; but Marian's indefatigable zeal soared beyond her comprehension. She watched and wondered, and felt her knowledge of human nature increasing.

So, at length, the wedding-day came. The grand event to which, during the principal part of her life, Marian had looked forward, was happily brought to pass: and Marian was married. It was a pretty wedding, and a sensible wedding; that is, the ceremony transpired without tears. And afterward—saith the *Rotherbridge Mercury*—"the happy couple, and eighty distinguished guests, partook of an elegant *déjeuner* in the great hall of the mansion." But when Marian, with her sisters and Gabrielle, retired to doff her bridal robes, and to don her travelling-dress, she began, for the first time, to cry, and to protest that she could never again, even with William, be so happy as she had been at home. Notwithstanding which, she had sufficient presence of mind to be extremely careful lest her tears should fall upon the strings of her new bonnet; inasmuch that Cissy, although in tears herself, could not help inquiring: "Shall I pin a handkerchief over the bows, dear?"—which

Olivia, who was, as usual, enacting the part of a comforter, thought sadly unfeeling in Cissy. Then a message came from below, to the effect that, if Marian did not make haste, the train would be lost; and then there was a great hurly, and a snatching up of stray articles, and kissing, and good-bys, and more crying. Until James, tall and commanding, made his way through the press, and taking forcible possession of Marian, bore her to the carriage. The admiral jumped in after her; and thus, according to certain views, ended, for all intents and purposes, Marian's life.

"Oh, Gabrielle! here you are! Lying down like a good child. That's right," said Cissy, entering Gabrielle's room, an hour later; "I came to ask you not to disturb Olivia just at present. She has shut herself up; and I am sure it is only fair that she should have time to cry out her cry in peace."

"Yes, indeed. Dear Olivia! How good she is! She makes me feel quite hopeless."

"Oh! 'quite hopeless,' repeated Cissy, laughing. "And wherefore?"

"She is so unselfish. I look at her, and think how impossible it seems that I should ever be like her."

"To tell you the truth, I, for one, should never wish to be like her. All things—good as well as bad—have their limits; and, in my opinion, unselfishness may be carried to nonentity-ism. If we have egos, why not use them. My maxim is: Be natural. We are born with feelings; and the more that we feel ourselves, the more we shall—or should—feel for our fellow-creatures. Moreover, it often does people good merely to see what others are going through; strengthens them, and so forth. No, Gabrielle. Olivia's a dear old thing; and self-annihilation may be her mission. But it isn't mine; and it isn't yours; so we won't go out of our way to try for it."

"I should not succeed, if we did," said Gabrielle, a little wistfully. "But I have often thought that the spirit which actuated Olivia's life is the spirit which has been at the root of every thing high, or noble, or divine, ever done on earth."

"I wonder—" said Cissy, meditatively—"if that is the spirit I feel within me, now? I know I am about to victimize myself in a most barbaric degree; i. e., to amuse those four horrid girls, our fellow-bridesmaids. Does that spirit make you wish the people, for whom you exercise it, at the bottom of the Red Sea; or, at least, the Pacific Ocean? Because, if so, I've got it."

"Why are they horrid girls, Cissy?" said Gabrielle, laughing. "They seem very nice girls to me."

"Because you are so amiable. But I am thoroughly unamiable. And I hate all girls generally; and these in particular—because I'm obliged to amuse them. What shall I do with them, Gabrielle? James and the other men are gone out; and the clouds are too black for croquet. There's bagatelle. Do you think they'd like a game of bagatelle? Oh, dear!"

"Yes, that would be just the thing; and I'll come too."

"No, you won't. You'll lie still and rest. Gabrielle, this must be the spirit—I'd give the world to have you, and yet I make you stay here! Sacrificing my own pleasure for your good! It is the genuine article, and no mistake. Lie down, Gabrielle."

"I can't, Cissy. I can't lie down any longer. I feel too restless."

"Restless! What about, pray? This state of things must be put an end to, or it will put an end to you. And so I shall let James know, in an anonymous epistle."

"James? Why James?" said Gabrielle, laughing and blushing; "I really must come down with you, Cissy. I'll sit in an arm-chair, if you like, instead of playing; but I must come."

"Well, that's a reasonable compromise. Take care, though, that you behave yourself pretty, before the girl with the big teeth; Janet Chamberlain. She's a rampant scribe, and will put us all in a letter. Indeed, I feel far from sure that she is not a reporter to some newspaper; and think what it would be to pick up a number by chance, and light on a paragraph headed: 'Extraordinary Occurrence at Farnley Park;' or 'Remarkable Conduct of a Young Lady in Yorkshire!' Nobody knows. Writing women are my dread and abhorrence."

"There's not much to dread in this one, I fancy," said Gabrielle, as they ran down-stairs.

But, in fact, at that very moment, could she have known it, the letter-box contained an envelope, directed to a particular friend of Miss Chamberlain's, and enclosing a minute account of the evident attachment between that handsome Mr. Gordon and his cousin Miss Wynn. In which—watching its progress from afar—Miss Chamberlain felt unbounded interest.

The young ladies were soon assembled in the billiard-room; Cissy, as mistress of the ceremonies, reigning supreme. With imperious ma-

jesty, she took Gabrielle's arm, and forced her down among the cushions of the arm-chair. Then, shaking her forefinger at her, she turned, with comical resignation, to the "four horrid girls."

"Well! now we'll choose sides; and we're an unequal number. My cousin is too much tired to play. Suppose I stay out, and mark, and place the balls?—Why, Mr. Morris!"

For Mr. Morris's head, and a portion of his right shoulder, had suddenly appeared at the door.

"Oh! Here!" said he. "Thought so. Yes."

"What's the matter?" cried Cissy; "what do you mean by profaning the sacred mysteries of this feminine assembly? I thought you had gone home long ago."

"So I had, Miss Cissy. But I'm come back. Want to speak to you."

The head and shoulder vanished, followed by Cissy. Janet Chamberlain looked after her with greedy eyes. Such incidents were to Janet's journal and correspondence what "accidents" are to a sketch.

Presently the door was thrown open. Cissy reappeared, and, with her, a young man; whereat Janet's curiosity augmented, and she began to hope for a second romance. It was not toward Cissy, however, she saw, an instant later, that his attention was chiefly directed. As he entered, Gabrielle, flushed and joyful, started to her feet, exclaiming: "Charlie! Why, I thought that you were a hundred miles away!"—and he, regardless of observers, clasped her hand vehemently; asking how she was, in a tone so earnest as to impart a new significance to the commonplace words.

"Her brother, of course," thought Janet. "What delightful affection!"

She expected a fond embrace to ensue; but in this she was disappointed. And the next moment, he addressed Cissy—Gabrielle's cousin—as "Miss Gordon." He could not, then, be Gabrielle's brother. Janet felt sorely puzzled; but the spice of mystery heightened her interest.

Gabrielle sat down again; the young man sat down at her side; Cissy returned to the bagatelle-board; and the game began. But Janet contrived to hear, and—within the limits of politeness—to see, all that was passing between the two—friends, or whatever they might be.

"How is it that you are come, Charlie? I can hardly believe it even yet."

"Believe it? Didn't you get my letter?" said Charlie, picking up from the floor a piece of chalk, and proceeding to use it as a ball.

"Your letter last week? Yes. But you say nothing—"

"Here. Just give it me," he said, smiling. "Now, what do you call this?"

He held the letter before her, pointing to the last page.

"I am going to Meddiscombe on Tuesday next; as, after all, Hawkins can't have me in December: and I would rather get my month's coaching now than lose it altogether. What do you call that, Gabrielle?" He continued his game of chalk, with a triumphant air.

"I overlooked that," said Gabrielle, coloring; "it is a postscript you see; and I read the letter hurriedly."

In fact, she had read it at the breakfast-table, conscious, the while, that James's eyes were upon her.

"Well! never mind," said Charlie, smothering a sigh; "I was doubtful about coming to Farnley, this afternoon; afraid of being in the way. However, I thought I would just walk over and see Mr. Morris; and he insisted on bringing me here. Gabrielle, how are you? Barber made me awfully anxious. I met him in London, and he said—"

At this juncture, Charlie was surprised to see how pale Gabrielle became, what anxiety filled her eyes, as, interrupting him, she cried:

"Oh, what did he say?"

The young man hesitated. He was hesitating still, when steps and voices were heard in the hall. The color, more brilliant than before, rushed back to Gabrielle's cheeks; and James, with three or four other gentlemen, entered the billiard-room.

"Raining cats and dogs, Cissy," began James; and stopped short. Janet Chamberlain, whom nothing could escape, observed that his face clouded. He looked black, as she subsequently wrote in her journal; and darted a sharp glance at Gabrielle.

"Why, Godfrey!" said he, "how d'you do? I had no idea that you were back in our part of the world."

"He did tell me," interposed Gabrielle, as if eager to show that there had been no concealment; "he did tell me in a letter, but I overlooked it."

"Oh," said James, shortly; "you are come to coach with Hawkins, I suppose, Godfrey?"

Charlie was about to reply, when Cissy, with a smile in which her brother detected no small amount of mischief, approached the little group.

"James, Mr. Lambert Waring has sprained his ankle, and can't come to-night. Won't you persuade Mr. Godfrey to fill his place? Olivia would be charmed, I'm sure. Unless—" she

turned to Charlie, "unless you have given up dancing? You said that you should give it up when you were ordained."

"I am not ordained yet," said Charlie, smiling.

He paused, glancing at James, who, for once in his life, was guilty of a momentary solecism in good breeding. While Cissy spoke he had stood immovable and frigid, wishing that she were a boy, in which case he might presently have relieved his feelings by administering a salutary box on the ears. As it was, he was compelled to smother them, and further, to be polite. After a short struggle, he seconded the invitation with so much show of cordiality, that Charlie—who had begun to fear that Gordon considered his appearance on this day as an intrusion—was reassured, and readily consented to supply the vacant place.

And now James, aware of Cissy's sharp eyes, and resolved that her ill-nature should not be gratified, insisted on sending a servant to Meddiscombe to account for Charlie's non-return, and to bring back all necessary appliances for his toilet. He was almost thrown off his guard, however, the next moment. He saw Gabrielle smile at Charlie—a smile of unfeigned delight. What would not he, James, have given for a smile like that! He turned away, and devoted himself to Janet Chamberlain, who had drunk in the whole scene with avidity.

The entrance of the gentlemen had suspended the game of bagatelle, and it was now proposed to substitute billiards—James suggesting pool, in which all might join.

"I don't know how to play," said Janet.

"I shall be delighted to teach you," said James.

"I couldn't think of giving you the trouble," said Janet.

"You couldn't give me a greater pleasure," said James.

"I'd rather look on, if you please," announced Cissy, and James knew that she spoke with a view to mischief. He made no remark, however, but proceeded to initiate Janet into the mysteries of pool. And when next he looked up Cissy had vanished, likewise Charlie, likewise Gabrielle.

Now, for several moments, Janet found him as absent as he had previously been attentive. He stood, indeed, cue in hand, his eyes fixed upon the table; but he allowed her to perpetrate a succession of villanous strokes without so much as a word of remonstrance. Janet, however, was not offended. In fact, she was gratified. He was jealous; it was just like a book!

Cissy returned ere long, her eyes dancing with malicious triumph. Again James felt that he would have given the world to turn her, if but for one second, into a boy.

"Well, Janet," she said, approaching, "how are you getting on? Have you pocketed many?"

"Not one. I am so stupid.—Really, Mr. Gordon, it is mere waste of time to try to teach me."

"Practice makes perfect," quoted James. "I suppose Gabrielle is gone to lie down, Cissy? Miss Chamberlain, you don't hold your cue quite right. Here—allow me. Yes, that's just it.—I suppose Gabrielle is lying down, Cissy?"

"No, she is not," said Cissy. "She is in the school-room with Mr. Godfrey. She looked cold, and I established them by the fire, and there left them, so comfortable that I found it no easy matter to tear myself away. But third parties are always bores in such cases, therefore I made an effort."

She spoke in too low a tone for any ear but her brother's. Janet, at a yard's distance, saw his face flash into sudden anger.

"Upon my word, Cissy, you had better take care! Coupling that young Godfrey's name with Gabrielle's—smuggling them off into rooms by themselves. It is very far from the right thing to do. People will think—"

"Mr. Gordon, can you tell me how to play this?" came in a hopeless voice from Janet.

James was obliged to go to the rescue, and some little time elapsed before he could return. No sooner was he free than he turned to look for the offender. He found her at his elbow, looking meekly up into his face.

"Well, James, dear! I am all attention. Go on. What will people think?"

"Cissy," said James, sternly, "you are a great deal too flippant. I beg that you will be serious, for once, and listen to me. Gabrielle is a mere child in experience of the world; but you are—or should be—very different."

"Quite an old stager, in fact," said Cissy.

"And," pursued James, looking unutterable things, "you should know better than to lay her open to the unpleasantness which is sure, sooner or later, to result from these constant tête-à-têtes with Godfrey. You are perfectly aware of what will be said—"

"I thought," observed Cissy, reflectively, her eyes fixed upon the opposite wall—"I thought philosophers never troubled themselves about what was said?"

"Gabrielle, at least," said James, biting his

lip, "is no philosopher. She is a girl; and a peculiarly sensitive girl. Any idiotic reports of—of that kind, would trouble her far more than they would deserve. And such reports are certain to arise—quite certain—if this go on. However, Cissy, I have told you my mind: so now you know—"

"I knew it long ago," said Cissy.

"And," continued James, "I must add, that I never suspected you of such an entire want of feeling. However, that's no concern of mine—"

"Well put," said Cissy.

"—and after all, I believe, the wisest plan will be to speak to Olivia—"

"Or perhaps to Gabrielle herself?" suggested Cissy.

James reddened, and turned to Miss Chamberlain: whom he did not again desert until, at the dressing-bell, every one departed, his or her several way: every one save himself. He remained; leaning against the billiard-table, and hacking with a penknife at a small piece of wood, which he had promised his little nephew, Johnny Peers, to convert into a boat.

"It is as I thought," he muttered. "Experience confirms my opinion that, to be in love, implies to be a fool, or worse than a fool. In what single respect have I, this afternoon, shown myself superior to any vapid school-girl, with her head crammed full of petty jealousies and pettier spites? My peace of mind is at the mercy of the most trivial objects. I am no better than Annie's baby there—which is forever squalling, confound it!"—as the cries incidental to the transit from drawing-room to nursery met his ear. He flung away the wood, pocketed his knife; and, angry with all the world—himself chiefly—relieved his mind by rushing up-stairs, three steps at a time, on his way to prepare for dinner.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity.

Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe."

JOHN MILTON.

THREE hours later, a considerable proportion of the beauty, rank, and wealth of the West Riding was gathered together at Farnley. The doors which divided the ballroom from the saloon were thrown open, producing the effect of one

magnificent apartment, brilliantly lighted, and elaborately decorated with evergreens and flowers. An excellent band had been procured from York; fair forms and fairer faces, set off by robes that might have graced Titania's court, floated to and fro: it was a world of music, of delicious perfume, of light, of beauty.

In early youth, such scenes seem to expand the soul; it spreads its wings and rejoices, as a butterfly in the sunshine. Few, perhaps, in the present assembly, had not already lived, or danced, away, this first unsullied gladness. But some—as, let us hope, in every assembly—had not: three or four very young girls, fresh from the school-room; three or four older ones, whom circumstances had prevented from mixing much in the gay world; and, it might be, one or two on whom Nature had bestowed the blessed gift of eternal youth—who still, despite their fading complexion, their sprinkling of gray hairs, saw "all things bright, with their own magic smile"—just as when they first came out, perhaps thirty years ago.

This latter number did not, of a certainty, include Mrs. Featherstone. But Mrs. Featherstone was present, her little sharp eyes roving, as usual, hither and thither. The also had been invited, and had accepted the invitation; but that very morning—so provoking! had been taken ill with a headache. She was so sorry, Mrs. Featherstone said. However, dear Olivia must excuse her.

Only two dances, and those square ones, were permitted to Gabrielle. Olivia was horrified at the bare idea of more. But Gabrielle was quite contented, more than contented. The music, the large circle of valsets, the pretty faces, the general radiance, transported her with delight. Eye and ear equally entranced, she forgot that she was sitting apart; and felt as though she had been transported to some fairy palace, where all was brightness.

Thus, doubtless, in past years, had felt many another: who, in this very ball-room, had joined in the minuets and country-dances of their period, with as much grace and spirit as was displayed in the quadrilles and galops of to-night. But that was long ago; their dancing-day had long ago been over. No one thought of them now, or questioned where they might be; to what scenes the hopes, and loves, and longings—too strong to die—which they had borne into that ballroom, were transported. The feathers and gauzes, the lace stomachers and massive head-dresses—once the unconscious stimulants

of so much vanity, envy, or anxiety: these remained, though hidden out of sight, in old chests and worm-eaten wardrobes. But their wearers, and they whose hearts their wearers had captivated: what of them?

"I remember," said a very old lady, who had just made her way to a seat behind Gabrielle; "I remember my mother's telling me that she was present, when a girl, at a monstrous grand ball, held in this room, at the coming of age of Robert Gordon—this boy's great-grandfather. He was uncommonly handsome, and as good a *parti* as James is considered now: and his parents expected him to make a grand match. But, after all, he married his cousin, Miss Dacre: quite penniless, they said she was. My mother, who saw them together at this ball, and whose eyes were prodigiously sharp, predicted the marriage, when she came home; and my grandmother boxed her ears. My grandmother had set her heart upon him for my aunt, afterward Lady Trevor: who died—let me see—sixty years ago, it must be now—at Rome. But at this time, she had just been presented; and, I believe, was vastly admired."

"But what of Robert Gordon and his cousin?" inquired a girlish voice, beside the old lady. Gabrielle became all ears.

"Miss Dacre? She died, poor thing. It was very sad. She had always been delicate; and some thought the Yorkshire air too bleak for her. Anyway, she died—of consumption; before they had been married two years. He never got over it. To be sure, he married again, and had children. But he was never the same—never the same."

The old lady went off into a dream of reminiscences. It seemed to Gabrielle that a shadow had suddenly dimmed the splendor; that an undertone of sadness had come to mingle with the music.

"How long ago did all this happen, grandmother?"

The old lady pondered awhile: calculating on her fingers, recapitulating dates and landmarks of dates, in a murmuring voice.

"How long ago, my dear? About a hundred years—yes, a hundred years last May, it must have been, since the poor young creature died. And a hundred and three years since the ball, my dear: where my mother met her, and annoyed my grandmother by predicting—" etc., etc., etc.—the whole story over again.

"There are reports about this Mr. Gordon and his cousin," said the young girl's voice.

"Indeed?" cried the old lady; "highly-tightly! I never saw her, did I?"

"No, grandmamma, never; neither did I; but I have heard a good deal of her lately. There are two stories: one, that Mr. Gordon has been jilted by Miss Featherstone, and is making up to his cousin from pique; and another, that he made up to Miss Featherstone from pique, and was in love with his cousin all the while."

"Miss Dacre was a beauty. Is this young lady a beauty, my dear?"

"I don't know, grandmamma. I should fancy not. But I want so much to see her!"

"To see whom, my dear Miss Fielding?" said a third—a bland, yet a venomous voice. "To see whom? I can point her out, I dare say, if you will tell me."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Featherstone—" Miss Fielding hesitated, remembering The. The old lady, however, was less scrupulous.

"Yes, my dear; of course. Mrs. Featherstone can point her out.—Clara is anxious to have a peep at a certain Miss—Miss—what is it, my dear?—a cousin, and an *innamorata*, she says, of Mr. Gordon's."

"Oh! Miss Wynn! Good gracious! yes. Where is she? I saw her just now, walking across the room with Mr. Gordon himself, and flirting egregiously. Pretty, did you ask, Miss Fielding? Oh dear, no. Quite the reverse. Plain, in fact. But you shall judge for yourself. Where is she?"

And Gabrielle felt that Mrs. Featherstone was looking out and about, far away, over her head.

"I don't see her at this moment; but she'll soon turn up, no doubt. As to the reports concerning her and Mr. Gordon, I can't pretend to say whether they be false or true. I am not so much interested in other people's affairs. However, every one knows what pique is, and does; and . . . this in strict confidence, Lady Jane—the voice became a hissing whisper—"to tell you the truth, poor dear The was obliged to . . . you perceive? . . . Poor fellow! most unfortunate, indeed. But it could not be helped. I assure you, I shall be quite thankful, for the young men's sake, when The is married. The has, you she has made, since she came out!"

"But does Miss Wynn flirt?" said Miss Fielding, disappointed. "I heard that she was delightful."

"Oh, pray, my dear, don't imagine that I wish to insinuate one word to the contrary! Appearances are deceitful; and, for aught I know, she

may be an angel upon earth. Just at present, perhaps, her head is a little bit turned. Only think what a match it would be for her! Not a farthing; and plain into the bargain. And Mr. Gordon—my dear Lady Jane, I do verily believe that, The excepted, Mr. Gordon might have anybody! Indeed, I can hardly believe he is seriously thinking of that insignificant girl. Young men will amuse themselves; but when you come to marriage—”

“Gabrielle,” said Charlie’s dear, good-natured voice; “are you ready for the Lancers?”

Gabrielle jumped up: clinging thankfully to his arm.

“Oh yes; do take me away, Charlie—to the other end of the room.”

“Why, what’s the matter? Are you sure that you ought to dance? You are trembling from head to foot!”

“Oh yes—I mean it is nothing. Let us go to the set out there.”

Charlie, anxious and perplexed, obeyed, and they began to dance; but her pleasure was gone. The fairy-land was no more. She would have given worlds to run and hide herself. Every now and then, in the distance, she caught sight of Mrs. Featherstone, who was making a circuit of the room: a circuit interspersed with nods, and whispers, and beckonings, and taps of her fan. And poor Gabrielle’s excited fancy pictured each of these gestures as relating in some way to herself; and after each, she imagined that some fresh eye was upon her, until the room appeared a sea of eyes, all staring at her: and a sea of voices, calling her a flirt, or worse than a flirt. The Lancers seemed interminable. At length, to her relief, the last grand chain was achieved.

“Charlie,” she cried, hurriedly; “please take me to that bench behind the door. I want to be quiet.”

Charlie, although distressed by her manner, took her at her word; and she soon found herself half-hidden in a corner. Another engagement compelled her squire, much against his will, to depart; she was left alone, not only feeling, but looking, exceedingly wretched.

“Tired, Gabrielle?” said James’s voice: and on the vacant half of the retired bench James composedly sat down. She started, shrinking and blushing.

“No, thank you, I am not tired,” she answered, and relapsed into silence, conscious that Mrs. Featherstone’s sharp little eyes had discovered, from afar, her hiding-place.

“That woman knows how to stare!” observed James, watching Gabrielle, narrowly, the while.

“What woman?”

“Mrs. Featherstone. Those eyes of hers have been transfixing us for the last two minutes. She seems to find something remarkably interesting—or scandalizing; that’s more to her taste—either in you or in me. Which is it?”

“I don’t know; but her eyes are very terrible,” said poor Gabrielle.

“Well! I can’t say that they terrify me much. So far as I am concerned, she is welcome to stare all night.”

“It is not for the staring that I care, but the talking, which is sure to follow.”

“Let it follow. Does your comfort hang upon Mrs. Featherstone’s opinion of your dress, or of the flowers in your hair, or of your face even?”

“But, James—you know her notoriety for making up—or it might be more charitable to say, imagining—unpleasant incidents.”

“And can she bring about, as well as talk about, the unpleasant incidents?”

“The people to whom she tells them believe them.”

“I am not so sure of that. Her little failing is pretty generally known. Still, if they did believe: what then?”

“What then? Why, James! who would willingly be abused, or even laughed at?”

“We should train ourselves to regard every species of falseness as something beneath our notice: too contemptible to trouble us.”

“But even if good, kind people, hear an untrue report, and condemn you?”

“Comfort yourself by thinking, ‘They only condemn me because they are deceived.’”

“Do you think me very weak, James? Your manner is slightly condescending.”

He smiled.

“I beg your pardon. I was only thinking what a mistake it is to care for the opinion of any one, even of the best. For my part, I always say to myself, ‘Let them rave,’ or, ‘Let them praise.’ What does either matter to me?”

“Then do you mean to tell me, James, that you don’t mind, one way or the other, what anybody says of you?”

“I think I know only one person whose opinion is of material importance to me.”

“Ah! Mr. Savill.”

“No, not Mr. Savill. I do value his opinion, in a literary point of view. But simply because

I rely upon his judgment, and believe that to be praised by him, implies to be worthy of praise. The person to whom I refer—her opinion is worth all the world, Mr. Savill included, to me: *as her opinion—nothing more.* It might be true, or it might be false; but if I could only feel sure of its being favorable."

"The galop is finished," said Gabrielle, rising hurriedly. "Is not this our quadrille?"

They joined the ranks; and soon—she hardly knew how—her wretchedness was gone, her first delight was returning.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, at length; "how I do enjoy this! I'm sure dancing is an instinct of our nature!"

James smiled, and was about to reply, when, in the background, he distinctly heard Mrs. Featherstone's voice observe:

"A genuine case of hook and line, Alfred. Is it not?"

James turned his head, and met the venomous stare. Mrs. Featherstone, leaning upon her son's arm, had paused, close behind them: to watch the dancing. Gabrielle also looked round, somewhat dismayed; but this last remark had been a dead letter to her. James, however, was less innocent. He avenged her by one of those slightly supercilious glances, which only those who have served an apprenticeship in the *beau monde* can properly bestow. Then, with his usual equanimity, he turned again to Gabrielle.

This behavior was quite too much for Mrs. Featherstone. She waited until Gabrielle had finished her crossings in the "Eté;" and then, sidling nearer to the obnoxious pair, and lowering her voice:

"Ah! poor foolish young man," she whispered; "the quiet flirts are the most dangerous, after all."

Once more Gabrielle looked round; and this time it was she who met the venomous stare; as Mrs. Featherstone, still supported by "Alfred," passed on to the saloon. Gabrielle longed to sink into the earth. James must have heard. He must also have understood. She dared not glance at him. She scarcely dared speak to him. Somehow or other, she contrived to get through the remaining figures, and, the instant that they were over, said nervously;

"Thank you. I shall go to bed now. Good-night, James."

But he offered his arm.

"Just one moment. I won't keep you long. I only want to show you the lamps in the conservatory."

"Please be as quick as you can," she entreated, still nervous, and exceedingly shamefaced.

"Why are you in such a hurry. It is not at all late."

He led her slowly along, down the whole length of the ballroom, through the saloon.

"Here we are, at last. What a progress it seems! Now look at the lamps, Gabrielle. How do you like the effect?"

Gabrielle looked without seeing, and replied that she liked it very much. She was not sorry when James led her on, deeper in among the shrubs and flowers, farther from the people and those eyes.

"Would you like a white rose, in remembrance of to-night? Your first great dance, you said."

She stood and watched him as he gathered, from far above her head, a spray with two spotless blossoms—blossoms lovelier than any that she had ever seen, until she came to Farnley. One of these he placed in her hand; the other he retained.

"Gabrielle, will you fasten this into my button-hole?"

"You'd do it better yourself, James. I have no pin."

He produced a small pin-cushion which Olivia had, that very day, presented to him.

"Here are plenty of pins. And"—his voice sank—"if you would not do it, I should not care for it to be done at all."

Gabrielle said nothing more. She drew off her glove, and placed the rose where he would have it. But her fingers trembled; a mist came before her eyes, and the pin refused to stick in.

"Why—you awkward child," he said; the words belied by the uncontrollable tenderness of the tone. He laid his hand upon hers, as though to calm its tremor; and afterward, when the task was finished, he held it still—held it close and fast. She tried to withdraw it; but he raised it to his lips—impressed on it a long, passionate kiss.

"Never mind what a cantankerous old woman says," he whispered. "Don't let that, or any thing else, vex you—dearest."

"Good gracious! what a fine camellia!" exclaimed the old woman's very voice. Gabrielle sprang away from James, snatched up her rose, and literally flew—past Mrs. Featherstone, and the terrible eyes—past "Alfred," who was close in his mother's rear—past the flowers—past every thing, to the saloon. Then, indeed, she slack-

ened her pace; but only for a minute. The hall reached, she set off again, never stopping until she was safe in her own room.

She sank into her arm-chair, to rest and to dream. Oh, what was Mrs. Featherstone to her now? What was all the world to her? What, in all the world, had any power to hurt her? She still felt the blessed touch of those lips upon her hand; she still heard that tone, that "Dearest."

"Of all the ill-bred young men," said Mrs. Featherstone, the following day, "of all the ill-bred young men whom I had ever the misfortune to know, that Mr. Gordon, my dear The, reigns supreme! Really, the bare thought of his airs last night makes me ill. If you could but have seen him look me over—or rather, through—his eyebrows just a hair's-breadth raised, in the most ridiculous way! And I positively caught him and that plain little cousin kissing each other's hands. Yes; you may stare, The. It was so. She had the good sense to be ashamed; for she darted off like a shot. But he—! My dear, he did not even change color; calmly took up her glove, which she had left; paused a second to brush a speck of dust from his coat; honored me with the merest shadow of a bow, and passed on, as cool as a cucumber. Yes, my dear The. You have had a fortunate escape. And I shall always, henceforth, affirm that Mr. Gordon is the worst bred, the very worst bred, young man whom I had ever the misfortune to know!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"I love you, loved you . . . loved you first and last,
And love you on forever."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

"GABRIELLE, may I come in? Good child, to stay in bed so quietly!"

"Olivia sent Talbot, quite early, to say that I must not go down to breakfast."

"She would send her again with a dose of nitre, if she could see how feverish you look! You have caught cold, you naughty, wicked girl. Dissipation doesn't suit you at all. And, by-the-by, what were you about in the conservatory last night? and why did you run off to bed without saying a word to anybody? There was quite a sensation, I assure you. First, Mr. Godfrey coming up to me, and asking if I knew where you were; and then I looking round and about, and seeing nothing—that I wanted; and then Olivia

inquiring of whom I was in search, and I, darkly apprehensive, answering 'Gabrielle'; and Janet Chamberlain bustling up to say that you were gone with James into the conservatory; whither, a prey to sinister forebodings, I repaired, not knowing what terrific vision might await me. But still finding nothing, I returned to the ball-room, and sought oblivion in the giddy mazes of the dance. Then, suddenly, behold James alone! preoccupied, pale, and grave. Whereupon, confronting him with a tell-me-the-worst-at-once countenance, I demanded to know—if he knew—the place of your concealment. He replied that he had not seen you for some time, but believed you to be gone to bed; which every day, or every night *dénouement*, was, to the ear of romance, unpalatable, but to that of friendship, grateful in the extreme; and so ended my dismay, and—Where did you get that splendid rose?" cried Cissy, with a sudden rush at a little flower-glass on Gabrielle's table.

"James gathered it for me."

"He did, did he? And its counterpart—I remember now—was in his own button-hole at supper. Humph!—There's the breakfast-bell. What a pity it is that you can't come down, Gabrielle! You won't be able to wish him good-by."

"Good-by! Is he going away?"

"Yes, dear; he's going away. But not to New Zealand, quite, yet—or to Highty-tighty—Hong-Kong, I mean; you need not look so dismayed. He's only going to Rotherbridge, to the Petty Sessions; he'll be back to dinner. Good-by. I must fly to refresh my inward woman."

And Cissy vanished; returning a moment later, to put her head in at the door, and inquire:

"Gabrielle, will you give me that white rose? I've fallen in love with it."

"Then go to the conservatory, and get another."

"But I want this, dear. Do let me take it. You shall have another, if you like."

"Cissy, you will get no breakfast, unless you go down."

"And you no peace," said Cissy, disappearing in earnest.

When Gabrielle, in her turn, descended found a comparatively desolate scene. The visitors were all gone; Cissy was performing a solitary pirouette in the ballroom; and singing that she "felt like one who treads alone, some banquet-hall deserted"—and not only felt like one, but was one.

"'Sic transit gloria mundi,' my dear Gabrielle!

'Man is a wapor, full of voes,
He cuts a caper and down he goes.'

'Vide the ballroom last night, and the ballroom to-day! Too melancholy to be borne, isn't it? So come with me; and I'll ensconce you, warm and cosy, by the fire in Olivia's sanctum. You are to nurse your cold, she says. By-the-by, James was so sorry to hear that you had caught cold.'

"James! Did you tell him?"

"I told him that you were as hoarse as a raven, and your cough hoarser; and that it was all his fault, for taking you into the draughty conservatory. And only think! my majestic brother blushed—actually blushed; 'celestial rosy red.'"

Gabrielle felt considerably relieved, when, after luncheon, Cissy, with Olivia, drove away to pay calls, and she was left alone. A bright little fire blazed in Olivia's room; and the crimson sofa was drawn up, as on that first evening, months ago, into the fire's vicinity. Upon this sofa, Gabrielle installed herself; a book in her hand. The house was unusually quiet. Baize doors and passages excluded all sounds that might be going on among the servants; and, for a considerable time, the silence was only broken by the occasional fall of a cinder, the ticking of the clock upon the mantel-piece, and the swaying of the trees, as the autumnal breeze swept over them.

Suddenly the hall door opened and shut: some one had entered. She listened; there was a footstep—a man's footstep; then Wilcox's solemn tone.

"The luncheon things are removed, sir. We did not expect you. Shall I—"

"I lunched at Rotherbridge," said James's voice. "Are the ladies out?"

"Miss Gordon and Miss Cicely are out, sir. Miss Wynn is in Miss Gordon's boudoir, sir."

"Tell Jeffries to look well to the roan horse, Wilcox. He seems out of sorts.—Thanks.—That will do."

She heard Wilcox's footsteps retreat; she heard James cross the hall—approach—pause for one instant, at the door. Then, with a scarcely perceptible hesitation, the lock turned, and he entered.

Their first simultaneous movement was to shake hands, and to wish one another good-morning. Afterward, James sat down upon a chair which was standing before the fire; and thus, during five minutes, at least, remained in perfect silence: his feet on the fender, his hands spread out over the blaze, his eyes looking into it. Ga-

abrielle, meanwhile, her book open on her lap, trembled—she could hardly tell why. At length, feeling that, come what might, this silence must be broken, she made a great effort, and spoke.

"You are at home very early, James. We thought that you were gone for the day."

A glowing coal had just dropped into the fender; James pushed it out of the fender, and under the grate, with his foot. Then he took the poker, and crushed out the flame, leaving the coal a cinder; and then he laid the poker down, and answered.

"To tell you the truth, Gabrielle, I came because I knew that the others would be out, and I wanted to speak to you alone."

She glanced at him, but said nothing; and another long pause ensued.

"I was sorry to hear that you had caught cold again. If you go on so, you will never lose your cough."

"My cough is much better," replied Gabrielle.

"But—" he continued, as if he had not heard, his eyes still fixed on the fire—"in our climate, at this time of year, colds are unavoidable. Did Olivia tell you what Dr. W—— had advised?"

"No. She promised that I should know before long, but she has not told me yet."

"He said"—James hesitated, and Gabrielle detected a faint, very faint, tremor in his voice; "he said that your best chance—I mean, your best remedy—would be a winter abroad."

"Did he?" exclaimed Gabrielle, startled. In her inexperienced ears, those words—"a winter abroad"—sounded like a death-blow; or, at best, an amelioration of a death-blow.

"He said that you would probably return in the spring as strong as, or stronger than, you have ever been. What do you think of this, Gabrielle? Should you like to try it?"

"I should like it, of course; but I don't quite see how it would be possible."

"Why?" said James; and there was more than a faint tremor in his voice, now.

"I could not go alone," she answered, quietly; "and I don't know any one who could take me. You remember what the Northern Farmer says—'Gin I mun doy, I mun doy.'"

"Don't, Gabrielle!"—cried James, hurriedly, putting his hands before his eyes.

"There is one way," he went on after a pause, resuming his first position—"there is one way in which you might go."

She looked at him, clasping her hands tightly together, in the struggle for composure.

"You might go," he said, gazing steadfastly into the fire—"you might go with me as my wife."

Still Gabrielle looked at him, her eyes dilating, her cheeks and lips vying in whiteness. She would, if she could, have spoken; but her voice failed.

"Will you?" said James, gently, leaving his seat, and standing before her. He tried to take her hand, but she shrank away.

"I don't know—" she said, nervously, the color rushing back in a flood: "I can't tell yet; you must give me time."

"Perhaps," said James, "some explanation—I am aware that my conduct, lately—in short, my—my—attentions to Miss Featherstone—"

He paused; her agitation was subsiding; he saw that she wished him to go on. So he seated himself beside her, steadied his voice, and did go on: looking straight before him as he spoke, with an incessant nervous movement of his signet-ring.

"Almost ever since I knew you," he said, "you have been to me what no other, man or woman, has been, or is, or could be. I was not aware of this at first; but I see it now. I have seen it for some time; it has deepened, grown upon me. I have loved you—only God knows how I have loved you, and how I have struggled—but the struggle was fruitless. I am at length convinced that I could as soon, by force of effort, annihilate my soul, Gabrielle, as my love for you."

"Why?" began Gabrielle: then stopped.

"Why try to annihilate it, you mean? I will explain. I think you know that, until very lately, I have regarded the state called 'in love' as an enervating and an enslaving state: tending to usurp authority over the intellect, and therefore dangerous. I have seen and despised it in others; for myself, I believed that I was naturally of a cold, almost a stoical temperament, and thus not liable, or liable only in a very moderate degree, to its influences. I was consequently off my guard. I mistook my growing interest, I may say, my delight in you, and in all that concerned you, for a mere ordinary liking, and I made no attempt to resist the fascination which deepened every day. At last—"

James paused, and looked at Gabrielle.

"Do I tire you?" said he.

"No; please go on."

The agitation was all gone now. She sat calm, still, and pale; listening, he could see, with intense earnestness.

"At last, circumstances occurred, which—in fact, I became suddenly aware of the truth."

"Stop a minute. When was this? Do you remember?"

"Remember? Could I forget? It was in August. You were at Lorton, gone to meet your—your old friend Godfrey."

"Oh!" said Gabrielle; "it was then. I see."

"What do you see?" he asked; but she would not answer him. He dropped the subject, for the present, and went on:

"I searched deeply into my heart; I sifted the whole matter to the bottom: and I came to this conclusion: that my love for you, if indulged, would absorb my nature to an effeminating, to an injurious extent. Therefore, I decided that, cost me what it might, I would crush out this love; and, to this end, that I would make it a duty to forget you, a sin to think of you. I determined to marry another, one whom I should never be tempted to love too well: one also, I might feel sure that I should not injure or deceive, by asking her, with such motives, to be my wife. Miss Featherstone exactly answered to this description, and I believed that she would accept me. Not that she cares two straws about me—but I could give her certain things that she does care rather more than two straws about."

"And would you have married her without loving her?" said Gabrielle, looking him steadfastly in the face. "You would have made those solemn vows, before God, knowing that you could not keep them? James, it was wrong."

His eyes sank beneath hers. He felt—yes, positively, he felt abashed. This innocent, simple child had rebuked him; had put his philosophy to shame.

"James, it was wrong."

The words rang in his ears. Why had he never thought of this before?

"You see, Gabrielle, Miss Featherstone—or I much mistake her—is a young lady without a heart: a species of individual that one may look upon, in my opinion, as fair game."

"I spoke for your sake, not for hers," said Gabrielle; relapsing into her gentle, retiring manner. "You seem to have been on the verge of perjury; her heartlessness could not alter that."

"Well!" he answered a little stiffly; "I won't attempt to excuse myself. I am merely laying the facts before you. You must judge me as you like. You know the rest—the state of things which you found, when you returned from

Lorton. What I was going through, however, in my secret mind"—his voice became half choked, and Gabrielle's tender heart went out in all its tenderness toward him—"what I was going through, however, in my secret mind, the while, you cannot know—I cannot tell you; words would not express it. Thank God, it came to an end, at last; my bonds were broken: and I saw that it would be madness to struggle longer against that which had become a part of my life. How it might have been, if I had taken it in time, I cannot say. But, as matters stand now, Gabrielle"—he rose from his seat—his tone deepened—his manner became agitated, impassioned; he did not think of the year to which he had pledged himself—he thought of nothing, in this moment, save her—"as matters stand now, Gabrielle, sooner could my right hand forget her cunning, than my heart could forget you."

One minute Gabrielle sat entranced in the rapture of being thus addressed by him—her Admirable Crichton, her hero, her ideal. One minute: the next brought bewilderment, anxiety, doubt. These motives, these feelings—now all open before her—were so utterly different from any which, in her perplexity, she had imagined, had attributed to him. She must have time, she felt, to ponder, to understand them; and when, after a considerable pause, he ventured to say, "Now, Gabrielle, you know the truth. Will you give me your answer?" she replied as before, speaking fast and nervously:

"I cannot just yet, James. This is all so strange; you must give me time."

He bit his lip.

"How much time do you want?" he asked, taking out his watch. "Don't leave me long in suspense; I can't stand it."

"May I have an hour?" said she, timidly.

"An hour. Well! I will leave you alone then, and come back in one hour's time."

He turned, not trusting himself to look at her again; and, without another word, quitted the room.

"Master appears to be in a sad taking about something," remarked Wilcox, twenty minutes later, in the housekeeper's private sanctuary. He had been to replenish the study-fire, and in one of the windows, had seen James—his head buried in his arms—neither looking up, nor moving, nor, to all appearance, perceiving the entrance of the butler. That worthy, who had never hitherto seen his master without all his wits about him, felt this circumstance to be highly distressing; as also did the housekeeper. But

Talbot, Olivia's stately maid, was observed to smile, and further to nod three times, in a mysterious manner.

Meanwhile Gabrielle was deep in meditation. She wished only to do right; but she could not satisfy herself as to what was right, and what was wrong. James's confessions showed that his requirements were more extensive, his peculiar opinions more deeply rooted, than she had ever suspected. Could she, if she married him, make him happy? Could she retain his love? For Gabrielle was sensible enough to know that love before and love after marriage are somewhat different; and she saw that James was not of a nature to be contented with mere fireside joys, with the common interests of ordinary domestic life. When the first passion had faded, he would tire, she knew, of a wife who could give him nothing but these.

And Gabrielle distrusted herself. She feared that, on a closer acquaintance, he would find her insipid, dull: and would repent his choice.

"He ought to marry a genius," she thought; "a Sappho, or a Corinne. I am too far below him."

But suddenly—just as she had begun to fear, that she had better give him up—the consciousness of her great love for him broke on her mind with overwhelming force; and gave her courage. She was weak—but her love was powerful; ignorant—but her love was wise; of earth—but her love was of Heaven. Then she saw that God, in sending this love, had sent, as it were, an angel; who could not fail, under His blessing, to lead her right at last.

And she felt herself suddenly strong, for all things that might come upon her: strong for weal or for woe, for life or for death.

The hour was over. She had risen, mechanically, to attend to the fire; and, turning, saw James.

"Well, Gabrielle!" he said; and his voice was very low, very deep, a little tremulous, as before; "well, Gabrielle! have you made up your mind?"

"Yes."

"And what is it?"

She glanced at him. He looked as though he were hanging, in an agony of suspense, upon her words.

"Is it yes or no? I implore you to answer me."

"Yes," said Gabrielle, faintly.

There was a long pause. The sudden rush of

joy, of certainty, seemed to stun him for the time. He could not speak, at first; he could only stand and gaze at her.

"You love me then, Gabrielle?"

"Yes," she repeated, in the same low tone.

"You are not afraid to trust yourself to me, after all that I have told you?"

"No, I am not afraid."

As she spoke, she raised her eyes. They met his and he smiled upon her—a sweet, a blessed, a divine smile, Gabrielle thought. Then, suddenly, she was in his arms; he was holding her close and fast; the pent-up love of months finding relief at length.

And Gabrielle did not resist him; for was she not his own? his until death—yes, and beyond death; his forever and forever!

CHAPTER XL.

"It is not because your heart is mine—mine only—
Mine alone;
It is not because you chose me, weak and lonely,
For your own;
Not because the earth is fairer, and the skies
Spread above you
Are more radiant for the shining of your eyes—
That I love you!"

"But because this human love, though true and sweet—
Yours and mine—
Has been sent by Love more tender, more complete,
More divine;
That it leads our hearts to rest at last in heaven,
Far above you;
Do I take you as a gift that God has given—
—And I love you!"

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

"HERE we are at last!" said Olivia, as the carriage came within sight of the door. "I wonder how Gabrielle has been getting on! I hope she has not felt lonely."

"To tell you the truth, I suspect she has felt exceedingly the reverse," replied Cissy.

"What do you mean? James can never leave Rotherbridge till quite late."

"Oh, no, never. Who mentioned James?" said Cissy, innocently.

She sprang from the carriage, as she spoke, and ran to Olivia's room. There, all alone, James sat: lost in a dream.

"Hum!" said Cissy.

He started, rising hastily to his feet.

"My dear Gabrielle!" cried Cissy; "you are wondrously transformed! and, to my taste, not for the better. Is Comus here still? Because, if so,

I trust he'll make a different sort of animal of me!"

"Where is Olivia?"

"Voice and all! The metamorphose is really perfect. What will James say, though? He 'can never leave Rotherbridge till quite late;' but he's certain to appear before bedtime. It will be Dromio over again; and I only hope that he may survive the fright."

"Cissy, you are a downright—"

"Fool, dear?" said Cissy, in an insinuating tone. "That little touch of Billingsgate enlightens me! Comus is innocent, after all; and this creature is James himself."

"Cissy, let me pass, if you please. I want Olivia."

"No doubt you do, dearest brother; and patience likewise. What has become of Gabrielle? I hope you have not been mending the fire with her? it would be very false economy. But I left her here alone: and now, returning, I find you here alone. Exceedingly suspicious."

"Gabrielle is up-stairs, I believe," said James. "Now, Cissy, please—"

He laid his hand on her shoulder, and gently assisted her to move out of his way. The next moment he was in the hall with the astonished Olivia.

"James! What has brought you home? You are not ill?"

"Ill! Nonsense. Come here, Olivia—to my study. I want to speak to you."

"But, James, it is time to dress. Can't you wait until after dinner?"

"No, I can't," replied James, impatiently. He drew her into the study, and closed the door.

"Well, Olivia!" he said, planting himself with his back against the wall—"well, Olivia! it is done. Gabrielle and I are engaged."

Olivia laid down her card-case, and sunk into a chair.

"You are engaged." Her lips rather formed, than spoke, the words. She had long expected these tidings; yet they came with the force of a blow. Her boy—her idol—was no more her own peculiar property. The days when she could so regard him, the days when she had secretly gloried in the thought that she was first to him, as he to her, were passed away forever.

But where she had lost, Gabrielle had gained. And Gabrielle loved him as well as—perhaps better than—she. She struggled one moment; and was content.

"I am so glad, dearest boy"—she said, standing on tiptoe to kiss him—"I am so glad to hear

this good news. I hope, I believe, that you will be happy. She is a very dear child."

This was a subject upon which James could not talk—to Olivia, at any rate. He returned her kiss; then stood silent; still leaning against the wall.

"There will be a great deal to settle," said Olivia, sinking again into the chair, and pressing her hand to her forehead. "It is growing late now; but on Monday we must have a long consultation. I suppose, on account of Gabrielle's chest, you will wish to be—married"—with a gulp—"very soon?"

James observed the gulp; and his conscience smote him. He felt that he had been selfish.

"Olivia, I hope you don't fancy that this will interfere, in any way, with my affection for you? Because, if so, you are mistaken."

"Oh, no!" said Olivia, smiling; although the smile was rather sad; "I fancy nothing. Don't trouble yourself, or let Gabrielle trouble herself, about that. I can't be your wife, but I can still be your sister; and Gabrielle's also—which will make me very happy."

"And you must go on living here, just the same," said James.

Olivia shook her head.

"No, dear James; it would be against my principles. A young couple is better alone. Of course I shall be sorry to leave Farnley; but—as Mr. Morris says—there are many alleviations. Cissy's company, in itself, is sufficient to make any house bright; and then Annie will be so glad to have us near her."

"Near her! You think of going to Enderby?"

"Yes. It has long been a castle of Annie's. There is a house—a very pretty one—just within the park-gates—"

"What! That brown affair, be-porched and be-honeysucked?"

"Exactly. She has often threatened to establish me there, with a cat and a tea-kettle, and so on. But all this is premature, James," said Olivia, rising; "we will postpone discussions until Monday. And now I must see Gabrielle. Where shall I find her? In my room?"

"In her own, I fancy. She left me some time ago. She was afraid of Cissy's coming back, and finding us together. I wish—"

"What do you wish?" asked Olivia, tenderly; perceiving by his tone, that something, some tiny desideratum, was still missing from his cup of happiness.

"I wish—" said James, answering mechanically—"that she were a little less—reticent—"

timid—I hardly know what to call it. I wish that I could feel quite certain of her loving me as—" He remembered to whom he was speaking; and drew himself up.

"My dear James! we must not expect much demonstration of that kind, at first. In time, no doubt, she will gain confidence. You must wait. Meanwhile, I am convinced, her real feelings toward you are all that can be desired."

"You ought to go and dress, Olivia," said James, stiffly, looking at his watch.

Olivia, the channel of her thoughts at once diverted, took up her card-case: exclaimed, "Indeed I ought!" and left the study.

The next day, Sunday, was warm and genial, more like May than the end of October. Nevertheless, Gabrielle felt weaker than she had felt for a long time. The various excitements of the past week had exhausted her; and now her joy, in its first intensity, seemed almost more than she could bear. The walk to church was short, but it tired her sadly; she was glad to get into her corner of the large square pew, to lean back and to rest. James leaned back in his own, and looked at her; and a truer feeling of devotion stole over him than he had ever known before.

As she sat there, so fragile, so pale, so pure, she seemed to him something akin to the angels; he began to doubt whether the reverence which she inspired in his heart, were not a deeper, holier reverence than that which led him to bow before the heroes of intellect—before intellect, in the abstract, itself. This was, at any rate the most celestial kind. Gazing on her, his grand dreams melted, sank into oblivion; his thoughts went back to a time when those dreams did not exist: when he, a little child, listened in innocent faith to the old Bible stories, making simple remarks concerning them, asking simple questions, wishing simple wishes about heaven, and the heavenly people, and being "good." The spirit that shone out in Gabrielle's face seemed, in some mysterious way, the same which in those childish days, in those Bible stories, had appeared so beautiful, so glorious; of which all fair things, all things to be venerated—stars, sunsets, churches, sweet music—had then been full.

Long had this bright halo of infancy faded; but now it—or its shadow—revived. He thought of a line which he had once heard in a song, and had condemned as extravagant: it ran—

"Taught to adore by earth's deep love."

Now he recalled his verdict. No; it was not extravagant; his own experience proved that it might be true.

The service began; Gabrielle's lassitude increased. The continual changes of posture were strangely trying. Soon every thing became dim and distinct. Mr. Edgecumbe's voice sounded like a voice in a dream. She said the responses mechanically: feeling, all the time, as though some one else were saying them, and she listening. She was conscious that James leaned forward, and asked if she felt faint—to which, also mechanically, she answered No: but afterward, as the Creed ended, he leaned forward again, and told her not to kneel; and, mechanically still, she obeyed—sitting instead. Then, there was only one person—James—besides herself, in the church. Or no—she was not in the church: she was somewhere in space, floating on waves of light. How they gleamed and undulated! She would have been afraid, she thought—only that James's dark eyes were still looking into hers, with the same expression of adoring love.—Now they were surely in the other world; the glory was too radiant for this! Was it death? If it were, death was not, after all, so very awful. What was this multitude rising around her? Angels perhaps: as they rose, their wings rustled; and now they sang:

"Oh heavenly Jerusalem,
Of everlasting halls!
Thrice blessed are the people
Thou storest in thy walls!"

"Thrice blessed are the people," Gabrielle strove to repeat; but her tongue would not move. She began to sink; James sank too; every thing was sinking—down—down—into gulfs of nothingness. She closed her eyes in horror; then, suddenly, a familiar voice exclaimed: "I believe she is coming round!"—and she found herself, greatly to her surprise, extended on a sofa in the vicarage drawing-room; Olivia bending over her with sal-volatile, and Mrs. Edgecumbe with brandy—while James stood at her feet.

"What is the matter?" said Gabrielle, feebly.

"Nothing, dear; don't be frightened. Sip a little of this," said Mrs. Edgecumbe.

"You fainted," said Olivia. "You should not have gone to church, dear child. You know I told you—"

"Hush, Olivia; don't worry her with what you told her, now!" said James, peremptorily; and Gabrielle tried to smile at him, all unconscious of Mrs. Edgecumbe's observant eyes.

She was soon so far revived, that Olivia was persuaded to leave her: Mrs. Edgecumbe—who had stayed at home to help a sick nurse—promising every care. The two ladies left the

room together; but James lingered behind, to bend over Gabrielle's sofa, and whisper, clasping her hand, that Olivia was quite right—she ought not to have gone to church—in the evening, she should stay at home, and he would stay with her.

"But, James, I should not like you to miss church for me."

"I'll walk over to Meddiscombe, after luncheon, then. Hawkins has a three-o'clock service. But what a scrupulous child you are!"

"Well, Gabrielle! So you've been and gone and done a regular scene," cried Cissy, rushing in after the service: Olivia having retired upstairs, with Mrs. Edgecumbe, to inspect a wonderful baby. "I hope you feel properly ashamed."

"I couldn't help it, Cissy," said Gabrielle, laughing; "how was it? Do tell me the whole story."

"Well, my dear, you looked terribly faint, all through the psalms and lessons. And when we rose at 'In choir and places where they sing, here followeth the anthem,' you sat still, apparently more dead than alive. And just as I was whispering to Olivia for salts, and James was beginning to look desperate, your head drooped, and your eyes shut, and your prayer-book fell, and off you went in a minute."

"But how did I get here, Cissy?"

"James lifted you up, dear, like a feather, and carried you out of church; and Olivia followed, and everybody stared, and Mr. What's-his-name, the church-warden, looked spasmodic, and made a dash at his pew-door, but thought better of it, and returned to his singing; and the clerk rushed into the vestry, and brought forth a decanter, and flew after you; and Jones, the school-master, flew after him. And the school-children began to behave themselves 'most dreadful,' of which I was glad—for it enabled me to relieve my mind, by frowning and shaking my forefinger. Then back came Jones, and cuffed Walter Primmins, and shook Sally Turner, and stuck Jem Giles into the middle of the aisle. And then the clerk came back; and, seeing anxiety depicted on my countenance, paused at the pew-door, and whispered consolingly that the young lady was very bad indeed, and had been taken to the vicarage. Whereupon I began to think of going to the vicarage myself: when, suddenly, the door opened, and behold James and Olivia!—James looking as well as could be expected, and Olivia considerably better than the same. Which reassured me.—And now, are you really all right, my darling? Seriously, you had no business at church. How did you and Mrs.

Edgumbe get on together? Were you congratulated?"

"Oh, yes. She said she saw the state of things, and—how horrid all that part of it is!" cried Gabrielle, impulsively.

Cissy laughed.

"Never a rose without a thorn, my dear! But, to me, the affair itself would be the thorn, and the congratulations the rose. It would be such fun to see the various forms in which the various people would embody their various views of the correct method of wishing joy! I should put them all in a book, afterward, with illustrations. Here comes James, to fetch you and the pony-carriage.—Take care that you don't upset her, now, James. She has been sufficiently upset, already."

Gabrielle was glad when evening came, and she and James were alone. For a time, they sat silent: thinking only of one blessed fact—that they were together—peace between them, at last.

James was the first to speak.

"Gabrielle, I want you to explain something: something that you said yesterday. You caught me up—do you recollect? in the middle of a sentence; asked me, as if you asked with a purpose, when it happened—"

"When what happened, James?"

"What I was talking of, at the time. You know. If you have no objection, I should like to hear what was in your mind."

Gabrielle hesitated.

"I don't like to tell you," she murmured, blushing deeply. "It might have been fancy."

"Forgive my asking: was not the fancy, in some way, connected with young Godfrey?"

"Yes," acknowledged Gabrielle, in a half-audible tone.

"You thought I was—"

"I thought you seemed a little—only a little—"

"Jealous," said James.

She made no reply; but he saw that her silence meant consent.

"Well, Gabrielle, I confess: it was jealousy that first opened my eyes. I have been jealous of him, desperately jealous. And I had cause to be so."

"Why! I always told you that we were brother and sister—nothing more."

"Yes, you did: and I believe, now, that, so far as you were concerned, it was true. But he—" James paused. "Perhaps this is hardly a fair question, but—are you sure that you are nothing more than a sister to him?"

Gabrielle burst into a fit of laughing.

"My dear child, what on earth is the matter?"

"Oh, James, I beg your pardon. But only to think that such an idea should come from you!"

"Why not?" asked James, somewhat puzzled. "It is surely a very natural idea."

"But you never used to think of such things; and you despised people who did."

"Ah!" said James; and, as he spoke, he sighed; "those days are over."

"The days when you disdained falling in love?"

"Don't say 'disdained,' Gabrielle; I only wished to keep it in its place. And that I wish still, indeed. You shall hear my views in full, some day; but, for the present, let us enjoy ourselves. I want you to answer my question."

"Well, James, I can't exactly look into Charlie's heart, you know; but I feel almost as positive about it as if I could. The bare notion of his liking me in that way seems quite repulsive: next to impossible."

"Why, Gabrielle?"

"Why? Why, because—because—" But when she came to search for reasons, she could not find any.

"We have grown up together," was all that came at last.

"Well, there's something in that. And yet—Gabrielle, it is almost beyond my comprehension how any man, not otherwise engaged, could live in constant and familiar intercourse with you, as he has lived, for years, and not love you!"

"That is only because—"

"Well, my child?"

"Because you love me yourself. I think, James, I would almost rather that you cared for me less."

"Less, my darling? Why?"

"I am so afraid of disappointing you; of your expecting more than I can give. When you live with me always, you will find that I am much shallower than you think me now. And you are so deep. I shall not be able to satisfy you, I am sure."

Poor simple child! As if he had ever, for one instant, imagined that she would! As if he had ever, in the highest height of his passion, so much as dreamed of making her the centre of his world; or any thing like the centre! His conscience smote him. He felt almost like a hypocrite, sitting there, and holding her clasped

to his heart, leading her—so, from her innocent talk and her innocent fears, it appeared—to suppose herself the first object of his existence, as he was, probably, of hers.

"My dear Gabrielle," he said, "it is the other way. I fear that I shall disappoint you; not you me."

"Oh, no!" cried Gabrielle, confidently; "that could never be. I only dread being tempted to—to—"

"Well?"

"To love you too dearly, James."

What! Had she a higher object, then? Did she also fear the predominance of her affections? His interest was roused.

"How do you mean?" he asked.

"I am so afraid lest this earthly love should absorb my heart, and hinder it from fixing first on God."

Something in this speech jarred sorely on something in James's mind; awakened there a sense of baffled craving. Even while resolving that—inexpressibly difficult as the execution of such a resolve must be—he would never, after the next year, allow himself to rest in her, to make her his chief delight; he yet desired that she should rest in him, should make him her chief delight, both now and evermore.

"Why, Gabrielle, this is mere casuistry! What in the world has your love for me to do with your religion? Surely, two feelings so distinct need not clash in any way."

"Oh, James! I am sorry that you think them so distinct. To me, they seem interwoven, each helping to strengthen the other. Sometimes, I think of this earthly love as a step, by which the Heavenly Love may be more easily reached. Only I feel in such danger of sitting down on the step, and forgetting that above it is another."

"And when you have mounted to the other," said James, his tone a little pained, "you will forget me altogether, I suppose; disdain to care for me any more."

"Oh no—no—," cried Gabrielle, eagerly, clasping his hand; "there the simile ceases, at once. That Heavenly Love is like the sunshine—it absorbs, without extinguishing, lesser lights."

"Gabrielle, am I very wicked? I cannot resign myself to be to you merely as one among those lesser lights."

"First among them, James. By far, by far, the first."

"But no more."

"More would be idolatry," said Gabrielle, gently.

Still he was not satisfied. Still, deep within him, he felt that baffled craving.

"Well!" he said, stifling a sigh; "perhaps, all things considered, we are about on a par. Not that I am troubled by religious scruples—"

"Don't say scruples, James. Fears."

"Fears, then. Those don't occur to me. But I still think as I have always thought, as regards the intellect and the affections. And I should not venture, even now, to indulge my love for you, if I were not determined that, cost me what it may, this love shall be to me a secondary, not the primary object."

"I should never wish to see love the primary object on the man's side," replied Gabrielle. "You know what Lord Lovelace said to Lucasta:

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more."

And if you were a soldier or a sailor, I could not bear that you should give up your profession for me, James; or, as matters really are, that you should stay away from your magisterial business, your writings, and so forth."

"You have not exactly hit my meaning," said James. "However—"

"Do explain it to me," cried Gabrielle; some indefinable misgiving agitating the surface of her mind.

"No; we won't waste our time in splitting hairs," he answered, rather impatiently. "Besides, for the present—till you are well, at any rate—I mean to relax all rules, and to do as, if I went by my feelings only, I should do always: think of you, and delight in you, and live for you, every day, and all day long."

Gabrielle smiled. These words unfolded to her so beautiful a vision, that she felt as little inclined, as obliged, to spoil it, by dwelling on changes which might never come. So she asked James no more questions; but, after a brief pause, he heard her sigh; and, looking down, saw in her face, a shadow, an expression of pain.

"What is it, Gabrielle?" said he, tenderly.

"Only a thought that crossed my mind—a thought that often troubles me."

"What a child you are for troubling yourself and making worries out of nothing! I shall have to take wonderful care of you, in mind as well as in body. But this thought; what was it? Or what is it? for I see it still."

"Oh, James!" she said, "I am so afraid—so very much afraid—that I shall die."

In one moment, James forgot, as yesterday he

had forgotten, every thing save Gabrielle. If the angel of death had appeared, at this instant, before him, and had proposed to leave her life untouched, provided that he would resign his high ambitions, his hopes of preëminent greatness; the bargain would have been accepted, gladly accepted.

He strained her to his heart as though his clasp could compass, not the frail young body merely, but the soul; and stay its flight.

"Die, my child!" he cried, his voice hoarse and broken; "you must not speak, you must not think of such a thing. It would be death to me, too!—it would be hell!"

"Oh, James; hush!" she said, awed, and looked wonderingly up at him. His cheeks were glowing, a strange, passionate fire shone in his eyes. Could this be the same James who, six months back, had seemed so cool and unimpressible?

"If you love me, Gabrielle, do not talk of dying. You cannot die. It is not possible."

"James—please, please be calm; don't say that. Suppose God should prove it possible by—"

"He would not—He will not. Gabrielle, stop! I cannot listen."

Then, in a fever of anxiety:

"Have you had that pain in your side again? Do you feel weaker?"

"I think not," began Gabrielle; "but—"

He cut her short with a hasty gesture.

"That's enough, Gabrielle. So long as you are not worse, we may have every hope that you will soon be better. Now let me hear no more of this, and promise me that you will think no more of it either."

"I will promise not to worry about it; at least, to try," said Gabrielle, gently.

"I sha'n't rest till I have got you away out of this wretched climate, and all to myself, to watch and manage as I like. I shall soon cure you. I am sure that I shall cure you. Say you think so."

And again as he spoke he drew her nearer, with that strong, withholding clasp.

"I will say I hope so, with God's blessing. But, James—don't be angry with me—I must tell you just one thing more."

"Make haste, then; get it over."

"James, you may think it silly, but one of the chief reasons why I fear I love you too well is that the bare idea of death is so terrible to me. Now, I ought—"

"Gabrielle, Gabrielle, I can't stand this."

"Only let me finish. I ought to be able to

think of it calmly, even happily; because, though it would be leaving you, it would be going to God. But, James, I cannot think of it so, and that grieves me."

"If you could that would grieve me, I fancy. Well! you have unburdened your mind, so let us drop the subject. You are a great deal too scrupulous, as you will acknowledge when your health comes back. Now should you like to hear those lines from George Herbert?"

Gabrielle gladly assented. He opened the quaint old book, and read until peace, fuller than before, returned to her, and tranquillity to himself.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Courage, poor heart of stone!
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left forever alone:
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply.
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"GODFREY," said Mr. Hawkins, entering the study where Charlie sat poring, sorely puzzled, over the "Ecclesiastical Polity;" "Godfrey, how are you related to that Miss Wynn who lives with the Gordons?"

Charlie unclasped two inky hands from a somewhat rough head of hair, and looked up.

"We are not related—only friends," he answered. "What of her?"

"She is just engaged—so Edgcumbe tells me—to young Gordon. Settled on Saturday, it seems."

"Oh! I am not at all surprised," said Charlie; "I have had suspicions in that quarter for some time."

Then his head went down upon his hands again, and his eyes returned to the "judicious Hooker." A quarter of an hour later, however, he rose, and closed the book with a bang. He had read enough, he said; he was getting muddled; he thought he should go out. It was possible, if Mr. Hawkins would excuse him, that he might not return to luncheon. Of course Mr. Hawkins would excuse him, and soon, greatly to his relief, he found himself in the open air.

Mechanically, walking as in a dream, he took the road that led to Farnley, steering straight toward the ostentatious-looking pile, which, with

its park and grand old woods, formed so prominent a feature of the landscape. Presently he reached the gates; they stood open, he entered, without knowing why, wandering off under the trees. Beneath his feet the dead leaves lay in shoals; he rustled through them, scaring now a stray deer, now a rabbit, but seeing neither, until a sudden dip in the ground brought him to a little hollow, overshadowed by a sycamore. Here a tiny stream trickled lazily down a bit of mossy rock, falling at its foot into a natural basin formed of stones, which the course of years had collected.

The music of the dropping water fell soothingly on Charlie's ear. The tranquillity, the seclusion of the place, seemed to cool his fevered spirit. He paused in his aimless walk; he threw himself on the grass beside the stones.

"Men—" says one speaking "out of the deep"—

"Men will be light of heart and glad
When we are sad;
Or if perchance with us 'tis light,
With them 'tis night!

"Kind Nature! but 'tis never thus,
With *these* and us!
But *these*, in all our moods we find
Unto our mind."

So also it seemed to Charlie, as he lay alone in the hollow; the mossy rock above him, the sycamore-boughs rustling gently, the water dropping.

"Oh, Mother kind! to this fair glen,
From ways of men,
Dear Mother, to thy breast I creep,
And weep—and weep."

Thus the lines end. Thus, after a season, a passion of tears burst from poor Charlie's eyes, bedewing the grass and the sear leaves whose better days, like his own, he thought, were over.

"Catch cold! Sure to catch cold!" said a voice, abrupt but kindly, suddenly breaking upon the stagnant despondency into which Charlie, his outburst over, had subsided. He started to his feet, and met the compassionate gaze of Mr. Morris.

"Godfrey! You'll catch cold, Godfrey;" and in the tumult of his feelings the bulky manuscript which, as usual, he carried, fell once more from beneath his arm.

"Never mind them. Never mind them," he said absently, while Charlie, no novice in the work, stooped to pick up the scattered leaves. This adjuration was repeated at intervals, until all had been collected and restored.

"Poor boy!" he murmured, then. "Poor boy! Blow fallen! Haw?"

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Charlie, turning furiously red, and pretending to be absorbed in his hat, the shape of which was somewhat disfigured. But Mr. Morris was not to be deceived.

"See how it is. Sorry for you. Very sorry. Come with me."

He thrust his arm into Charlie's, and drew him along, in the direction of the creeper-covered cottage.

"Where do you want me to go?" said Charlie, too much dejected to resist: or, indeed, to care, one way or the other, what became of him.

"Want you at my house. Want to talk to you," panted Mr. Morris.

The young man patiently submitted to be dragged over the grass, until the cottage was reached. Mr. Morris conducted him to the study, pushed him down upon a seat, and, standing before him, surveyed him from head to foot.

"Well, sir?" said Charlie, feeling—despite his trouble—that he could have found it in his heart to add, "I hope you'll know me again!"

"Well, Godfrey? Well, my boy? Now tell me. Don't shut yourself up from me."

The old man tilted a chair which stood at Charlie's elbow, dislodged a pair of boots, and took their place.

"Make a clean breast of it, if that will be any comfort. I feel as a father to you. I do indeed." His hand came down, heavily but kindly, on Charlie's shoulder.

"You are very good, sir. But . . . I am rather in the dark."

"Ah, now don't—" and there was something of entreaty in his tone—"don't, I beg of you, shut yourself up from me. I know. I was by you, as you lay on the grass. I saw—heard—forgive me. Went away—came back when you were calmer. My soul yearned over you. Yes. No exaggeration. You looked, when you lifted your face, so like . . . so like . . . Ah!"

He paused, with one of his long, groaning sighs: and looked silently, for a while, into the smouldering fire which filled about a quarter of the grate.

"A heavy trial. At first sight, seems a pity. But you must bear; and hope. It is not, bad though it be, what I—You are the only sufferer; *she* is happy: thank God for that. Ah! if I could have had the same comfort—! But as it was—O my God!" he raised his hands, and his dim eyes, from which tears were stream-

ing—"Thou alone knowest—Thou alone—" and again came that sigh. Then calmness.

"But it is over now. All over now. She is at rest."

"Mr. Morris," said downright Charlie, "I can't make it out. Were you ever engaged to my mother? or what?"

"I'll tell you. I'll tell you. The time is come. First, though, let me hear. Was this quite unexpected? Unburden yourself. Let me, do let me, be to you as a father."

And, thus urged, Charlie, always of an open nature, broke down in his reserve. He did not, indeed, expatiate; he did not sentimentalize, or declare that his heart was broken. But—helped out by occasional questions and ejaculations from Mr. Morris—he contrived to tell the few facts, few and simple, of his story. This done, he felt in some degree relieved; he felt also exceedingly grateful.

"I don't know, I'm sure," he said, "why you should take such interest in me and my concerns—"

"Stop!" interrupted Mr. Morris.

He rose, and, fumbling in his pockets, produced a bunch of keys; then crossed the room, and unlocked an ancient desk, which stood on a chair near the window. In this desk again he fumbled: while Charlie watched him, somewhat puzzled. Finally, he brought to light a couple of letters, tied together by something that had once been pink tape.

"Here"—he said, returning to his seat—"you shall read these. They will—they will show you why."

He untied the tape—unfolded one of the letters, with a trembling hand.

"It wants some explanation, I see. May be as well to tell you every thing. Then you'll understand, once for all.

"Long ago"—his voice grew dreamy, and his eyes looked out into some spiritual distance—"long ago, at Leamington, I met her—your mother. Pretty—beautiful—fair hair—an innocent face—eyes like blue veronicas—a heavenly smile. I saw her, and—I loved her.

"But she was a nobleman's daughter; sought after on every side. And I was a poor curate—plain—insignificant. Not"—a sad smile stole over his face—"not exactly what I am now—sorrow has somewhat changed me. But still, in all save love, far below her.

"I hung about her—could not help it: thought that it would hurt no one but myself. Talked to her often, and she to me. She was very pleasant,

very sweet; but I took it for mere courtesy. Loved her the more for it—hoped none the more. Never hoped at all, indeed. Why should I?

"Well! time wore on, and, at last, a report got about that there was something between us. Spread through Leamington; she heard it; so did I. Thought it, in consequence, my duty to go less frequently to the house, and, when I met her, to avoid her. For I believed that such a report, if established, would pain her; perhaps disgust her; whereas, without fuel, it would soon die away, leaving me free to renew our intimacy. But it never was renewed. Never.

"She noticed the change—connected it and the report together. She thought—this letter will show you what she thought; and she was piqued. For—for she loved me. It seems strange; but these things are unaccountable. She did love me, and—O delusion of all delusions most unwarranted!—she imagined that it was without return.

"She had a high spirit—sensitive too. There was a Colonel Godfrey—your father—ah!—then staying at Leamington. She had refused him once; but now—he proposed again, and she accepted him. Poor child! it was wrong. It was very wrong. But God is merciful. She knew not what she did."

"Pray go on," said Charlie: for Mr. Morris had relapsed into a dream. He started.

"I had a sister—a dear sister. She is with the angels now; but in those days, she lived with me at Leamington. It happened that she and Lady Rose—your mother—had struck up a friendship; and before the engagement with Colonel Godfrey was a week old, my sister had guessed the whole truth: though she said nothing, at that period, to either of us. But I fell ill: very ill, they tell me. What it was, I hardly know—and whether or no I raved, I know not: but from that time, it got abroad, that the illness was for your mother's sake. And your mother heard. And on the eve of her wedding, she wrote this—this letter. And she left it with my sister, begging that if, ere long, she died, it might be given to me. And the next morning, she—your mother—was married, and went away. And soon after—how soon I knew not; in those days, I kept no count of time: it might have been a year, or it might have been two years—but soon after: we heard that she was dead. She had pined from the era of her engagement. And I knew"—an awful grayness overspread the furrowed face—"I knew that I had killed her. No—say nothing. I can't talk about it. But I did kill her.

God that your trouble has, at least, no such bitterness in it! . . . My blessed darling, for whom I would willingly have shed my life-blood, drop by drop . . . I killed thee . . . I broke thy heart . . . On me is the guilt of thy marriage.—O Lord, have mercy! . . .”

He paused in anguish; one of those terrible breathless spasms to which, at times, he was subject, distorting his features. Charlie stood up, dismayed; but Mr. Morris, waving his hand, as if to decline assistance, stumbled, rather than walked, to the door, and quitted the room.

“The heart knoweth his own bitterness.” There is sorrow, as well as joy, with which a stranger—nay, a friend—intermeddeth not.

The young man, left alone, examined the letters. He opened them with a sense of awe—such as one might feel for something turned up with the soil of a long-closed grave. The first, which seemed as though it would fall to pieces in his fingers—it was so old, and had evidently been unfolded so often—was written in an unformed, almost childish hand; and blurred with tears. As he read, he fancied that he heard the young pathetic voice pouring out its confession—telling how she had cared for Brian Morris, for him only, from the beginning; explaining, in simple words, her sad mistake; begging his pardon; then going on to speak of her future life, in utter hopelessness—excepting in so far as that a secret presentiment—“something,” she called it—whispered that this life would not be long; that death would soon come, and make her free.

The second letter, addressed to Miss Morris, showed how the presentiment had been realized. Charlie recognized the signature as that of his mother's favorite governess, who had brought her up, and had been in the stead of a mother to her. The story of the quiet death was fully and tenderly told—how that long hours of pain had ended, toward evening, in drowsiness; that to this she would not yield, until her little boy had been brought to the bedside to kiss her, and wish her good-night; after which, composing herself for sleep, and turning her face to the window where the sun was setting, she had closed her blue eyes; and so had died.

She was very happy in her mind, the letter went on to say; glad to have done with life in this weary world; and sorry, too, for all that had been wrong and mistaken in her conduct; dying humbly, with the hope to be forgiven, and to start afresh in the world to come.

Colonel Godfrey was not with her; and Charlie knew that her spirit would pass none

the less peacefully. He had been no true husband to her. She had left him a message, however—her “love,” and “please take care of dear baby.” But that other, who might have filled his place, to him no message had come; no sign, whether or not she had thought of him, in those last hours. So careful, evidently, had she been to keep to the end, as far as in her lay, that solemn promise by which she had pledged herself to forsake all other but her wedded husband; to cleave only unto him. It was, perhaps, the continual struggle so to keep that promise, which had worn her out before her time.

Charlie refolded the letters, and thanked God that his mother was dead.

Then his thoughts turned to Gabrielle. He might suffer—must suffer; but Gabrielle was spared. His trouble seemed no longer too hard to bear. It was almost welcome now.

Suddenly the door opened; and Mr. Morris reappeared. He looked wistfully at Charlie; the young man rose to meet him, grasped his hand.

“I am awfully sorry for you,” he said; “I can't tell you how awfully sorry I am.”

It was but a poor speech for the occasion! Yet it did Mr. Morris good. He returned the grasp, and tried to smile; and they sat down, side by side, as before.

“I'll tell you what”—said Charlie, after a time—“when I get into my rectory, you must come and make your home with me. I have never thought”—his voice shook a little—“of living alone. I could not stand it, I'm sure. And if for nothing else, for my mother's sake I should feel it an honor to have you.”

“Thanks, my boy. Very kind. We'll consider it nearer the time. Perhaps, though, before then, I may be gone.”

“Gone! Where?” said Charlie, staring.

“Home,” answered Mr. Morris, with that distant look in his eyes—“home. Much to learn yet, that's true. But might be allowed to finish there. Always hoping it.”

He pointed to the glass of water, with the cluster of roses, which were never missing from his table.

“See. I have these before me, to keep my hope fresh. In summer, I get wild ones; in winter, I beg them from the park. So that, every day, I look upon a rose—always living, always sweet—and, looking, think of my own Rose, in the garden of Paradise. Yes; all flowers are blessings, but a rose I can never see,

without saying in my heart, thank God for it—as for my Rose above!”

He went off into another dream; and Charlie rose to take leave. But now Mr. Morris, in much penitence, remembered that he had been offered no refreshment. He must, he must, indeed, stay and have some; and Mr. Morris, the while—to put a little heart in him—would read aloud the last few pages of the introduction to the treatise on the Missing Ten Tribes.

So the young man resumed his chair, and recruited himself with beef and beer; while his host, seated in the window, and lifting up his voice with right good-will, emitted gusty paragraphs from the closely-written pages; which, but for Charlie, would long since have been scattered, like those of whom they treated, to the winds.

CHAPTER XLII.

“’Twas now most amusing to traverse the shade,
And hear the remarks that were privately made;
Such whispers, inquiries, and investigations!
Such balancing merits, and marshalling stations!”

ANN TAYLOR.

JAMES, in these days, felt himself to be exceedingly proud of Gabrielle; and for once in his life his pride was not misdirected. The news of the engagement flew far and rapidly; and bevy of visitors poured in upon Farnley, to congratulate and to inspect. A rage for making her acquaintance took possession of the neighborhood. She—her antecedents—her looks—her fortune, or rather, her non-fortune: became a universal topic of conversation. Of all this Gabrielle was fully aware. She knew that, for the most part, these people who talked to her so pleasantly, who paid her such unwonted compliments, made themselves so unwontedly affable, were taking her measure, the while. Not her bodily measure only, but her mental measure; and again, not only her mental measure, but the measure of her manners.

For herself, she would willingly have shrunk into the shade, leaving them to judge of her as they chose. But in that case, how would they judge of James, and of James's discernment? This consideration spurred her on.

“I know I am not fit—” she thought—“to be chosen by him—I, who have no beauty, no genius; who cannot shine in any way, even in society—for I am still continually in fear of making some awkward mistake. But one thing I can do: *my very best* to prevent his feeling ashamed of

me. Or rather—he is too good and too noble for that—to prevent his having cause to feel ashamed of me, or these people to despise him for loving me.”

And this she did prevent; proving herself, even outwardly, as worthy of the position to which she was called, as though she had been born or brought up to it: worthy, indeed, to a degree which no mere advantages of birth or of education could have insured.

“Gabrielle!” said Cissy, one day, in a tone of deep solemnity; “what in the world have you been doing, to put James in such a state about your behavior in ‘company?’”

“I?” exclaimed Gabrielle, instantly crimson; and looking both puzzled and distressed.

“Yes, you. I was in Olivia's room, and heard his comments. I always knew that he was absurdly fastidious about young ladies' manners; and as to ~~the~~ young lady, his own peculiar property—she, to satisfy him, must be something super-hyper-superlative: quite a female Lord Chesterfield. So, Gabrielle, think yourself lucky that he found no more fault than he did: instead of looking ready to cry at the bare idea of his finding any fault at all.”

“But what fault did he find, Cissy? Do tell me. I will try to mend it.”

“Then I won't tell you. Why should you trouble yourself so much about his opinion? Snap your fingers at him, and strike out a new line of manners for yourself; and if he object to them, remind him that tastes differ. But come, Gabrielle—you silly child! I do believe that you are really vexed.”

“Please tell me what fault James did find. It was only a simple thing, I suppose, from what you said just now?”

“To the last degree simple, my dear.”

“But what was it, Cissy?”

“Well! I have heard the same quality somewhat vulgarly defined, as ‘a footless stocking without a leg.’”

“Now, Cissy—!”

“My dear child, don't look so reproachful. The thing was nothing. He found no fault with you, at all at all—as Paddy would express it.”

“But you said that he was ‘in a state.’”

“Quite true. A state of glorification. He rushed into Olivia's room, half mad with enthusiasm, and began to rave about your perfections as though they had been the perfections of Plato, or Mephistopheles, or any other of those ancient creatures of whom he is so fond.—I don't mean Mephistopheles, but I mean somebody else begin-

ning with M; so 'tis all the same.—And then he—James, not Meph., you know—went on to say, that if you had been brought up in a yard—a court, at least—your manners could not be more perfect, or he more proud of you—your gracefulness, natural ease, etc., etc., etc., etc.”

“Oh, Cissy!”—and Gabrielle’s face literally shone; “did he really say that?”

“Yes; and more too. Olivia confessed that your pretty behavior in public had often surprised her, because, before you came to us, you had seen so little of the world. Olivia is so short-sighted. For aught she knows, you may have gone to some academy in Eversfield village, where ‘manners’ were ‘twopence extra;’ and that twopence you may have paid. I was about to suggest this solution to the problem. But James hit on a better.”

She paused; and Gabrielle looked at her, all eyes.

“Open them a little wider, dear, and put in a little more glitter; and they’ll be just like his—allowing for differences of color. And he glowed, and looked so triumphant, I was sorely tempted to knock him down! only I recollected that that would not be a very feminine proceeding: so refrained. And then—his voice as high-and-mighty as the rest—he said: ‘It is innate!’—There, Gabrielle! When you are married to him, I suppose that, since married people are one, it—whatever it is—will be innate in him too. No doubt that is the secret of his exultation. In praising you now, he is praising himself in the future. Reynard! And as for you—what do you mean by smiling so absurdly, just because a stuck-up young man chooses to pronounce you his model of manners? Gabrielle! Gabrielle! (By-the-by, I think I shall call you Gaby, for short)—why will you persist in looking so outrageously happy?”

“Why? Because I feel happy,” said Gabrielle.

As indeed she did.

About this time, James—somewhat to his disgust—received the following note:

“THORNMOOR, Friday.

“MY DEAR GORDON: So you have come down from your pedestal at last! I rejoice to hear it. But what a close fellow you are! Unless the affair be of mushroom growth; which, in your case, seems hardly probable; you must have been in the very act of such coming down—two-thirds of the way, at least, I’m sure—when I saw you, the other day. And yet you talked . . . !

however, I won’t be hard upon you: never mind, now, *how* you talked.

“I suppose I ought to indite a few pretty wishes—‘May your bliss be only half what mine is!’—and so forth. Really, though, the weather is too dispiriting—‘no lark’ (and I am any thing but a lark) ‘could pipe to skies so dull and gray.’ And albeit that your note of this morning is as like a poker as any note could be, we are old friends, and know each other too well, I hope, to make a fuss about our ps and qs. So you’ll excuse me.

“I fear that I shall have to forego the pleasure of seeing you turned out a domestic man; as I am shortly to be dragged all over England, on what my wife calls a round of visits. We start on Monday; alas! no time is left for making Miss Gabrielle Wynn’s acquaintance. The fair enslaver who has enslaved you, must be a sight for a sair een. I have been describing her, body and spirit—as I imagine them—to my wife; whom, by some injudicious contrast, I have contrived, in the process, to offend. She threatens, consequently, that she will speak to me no more to-day. *Entre nous*, I feel that I can bear it.

“May you ever—to sum up my desires for your matrimonial happiness—be as unable to enter into the spirit of this last sentiment, as I doubt not that you are, at this moment! And believe me always, my dear Gordon,

“Yours to command,

“GEORGE PETER RAYNTON.

“P. S.—My wife—ignoring the threat—has just begged me to return your kind remembrances into your own bosom; together with all proper congratulations. Whereof she dictateth fitting words; which I repress, being chary of my ink; and once more, Vale!”

James did not show this letter to Gabrielle; judging that its perusal would scarcely tend to bias her in his friend’s favor. For himself, he felt, at first, exceedingly displeased with Raynton; but his displeasure was soon forgotten in the more important considerations which at present filled his mind. The compulsory brevity of his engagement, and the long absence that was to follow, involved a great press of business; and James was, at this time, every day—now and then, all day—closeted with steward, solicitor, or tenants. He insisted that the wedding should not be postponed beyond the end of the month. The winter abroad would be of no use, he said, unless they started, at latest, then. Olivia sighed over the *trousseau*; but James was firm. Which was the

most important, he should like to know—the *trousseau*, or Gabrielle's life? At length, by common consent, the day was fixed for the thirtieth of November.

Mr. Lascelles, her father's friend and James's co-executor, was, at her own desire, to give the bride away. She also, as a special favor, begged leave to invite the Barbers; whereupon James informed her that she should invite all Eversfield, if she chose; and the result was that, not all Eversfield, but Mr. and Mrs. Barber, with their eldest girl, were bidden—greatly to their pride and glory—to the marriage-feast. The house in Sir Philip Peers's park was already in course of preparation for Olivia and Cissy; but it was agreed that they should remain at Farnley during the winter.

And now all preliminary arrangements were complete; and Gabrielle began to realize that—as Cissy expressed it—her single life was in a rapid decline.

One afternoon, about a week before her marriage, she was sitting alone in the drawing-room. James had just started for London, not to return until the eve of the great day. He was then, with his best man, a young cousin, Lord Murray by name, to dine at Farnley, and afterward proceed to a shooting-box which Lord Murray possessed in the neighborhood; whence, on the following morning, they would together drive to church.

Thus—with the exception of a single brief and crowded evening—Gabrielle would see no more of James, until they met to be made one. Thinking of this, and of all that lay before her, a loud ring at the hall-door bell escaped her notice. She was therefore somewhat startled, when, in the anteroom, she heard a plaintive voice:

"Oh! on no account disturb Miss Gordon. I wish to see Miss Wynn, and Miss Wynn alone.—My sweet Euphrosyne, will you oblige me by picking up my fan?"

"Lady Louisa Pembroke and Miss Pembroke!" announced Wilcox's stentorian tones. Immediately afterward, followed by Euphrosyne, Lady Louisa entered. Her flaxen curls were so arranged, that they almost met across her face; but room was left for the large light eyes to transfix Gabrielle with a mournful and significant gaze. Solemnly and noiselessly, she crossed the room; suffered her plump hand to be taken and dropped; and subsided into a chair.

"Well, Gabrielle! how are you?" cried Euphrosyne; "our bridesmaids' dresses came home

this morning. They look so pretty! and Miss Reinheldt thinks—"

"My sweet Euphrosyne," said Lady Louisa, waving her fan; "I am sure that, to oblige me, you will temporarily deny yourself, by remaining silent."

And silent Euphrosyne became; while Gabrielle, in some trepidation, wondered what was about to happen.

"Gabrielle! this is a solemn time for you."

"Yes."

"A time of awful import. You may have thought me remiss for not calling upon you sooner; but my visit was purposely postponed. I believed that what I had to say, would be more effectual, said now—now, when you must, at length, have begun to realize the true nature of your position."

Lady Louisa paused, laid down her fan, and opened a gold smelling-bottle.

"My sweet Euphrosyne," said she, inhaling its strong odors; "my little innocent child! you must not listen. Go away, and sit in the carriage."

"I think—" said Gabrielle, trembling at the bare idea of being left alone with this alarming Lady Louisa—"I think she could hear nothing at that far table; and there are some new books—"

"Oh yes, mamma; the books look so delicious! I'll stop my ears, if you like," burst in Euphrosyne.

"My sweet Euphrosyne!" said Lady Louisa, mildly; "is it probable that you, or any one else, should find it necessary to adopt, at such a distance, such a measure, to avoid hearing me? Your thoughtlessness, my child, continually lays me open to misunderstanding. If Gabrielle did not know me, what kind of voice would she imagine that I possessed? But you mean no harm; the young do not consider. Kiss me, and retire."

Euphrosyne obeyed; flying, delighted, to examine the new books. Then Lady Louisa put forth two fat fingers, and pressed them upon Gabrielle's wrist.

"Gabrielle, what I am about to say, I say for your own good. It is pity, true pity, that actuates me."

"Pity!" Gabrielle could not help exclaiming. It seemed to her, that she had never stood less in need of this amiable commodity!

"Pity," repeated Lady Louisa. "I am glad to think that my trials have not, as yet, closed my heart to the trials of my fellow-creatures. It

ever, been my misfortune, to feel 'for another's woes' as though they were my own. I feel you. Yes, Gabrielle. You are an orphan; and I am a mother. I feel for you deeply."

"You are very kind, Lady Louisa. But indeed I am quite happy."

"Do not attempt to deceive me," said Lady Louisa, oscillating her flaxen ringlets; "I know that it is to feign merriment, even frivolity, while wretchedness preys beneath. But, with me, you may cast off every disguise. Another week, and it will be too late. Now is your time. Unburden yourself, as to a mother."

"I have really nothing to unburden, Lady Louisa," said Gabrielle, laughing.

"That hollow, hollow laugh! Let me lay the case before you. Gabrielle, I speak from experience. Riches cannot make happiness."

"I never supposed that they could."

"Neither riches, nor the gaud and glare of the world. Happiness lies in the heart. My child, a country parsonage—humble though it appear—might become, if shared with him you love, a Paradise on earth."

"But you see," said Gabrielle, coloring, "James does not happen to live in a country parsonage."

"No; James does not"—with invidious emphasis. "Some one else, however—some one whose name is written, or I much mistake, deep in your soul—does. Or rather—will. Gabrielle! Now, as a last resource, I offer my assistance in restoring you to peace."

"I am at peace, thank you," said Gabrielle.

But Lady Louisa took no notice.

"Your cheek is pale. You cough. You are wasting away—"

"I am much better than I was; and the doctors think that Pau will quite cure me," said Gabrielle.

But still Lady Louisa took no notice.

"Your cheeks glow with a false radiance; but your heart is ill at ease—"

"Then it was never well at ease," said Gabrielle.

But neither now did Lady Louisa take notice.

"Tell me, my child. What is it that divides you? It cannot be *pique*? It cannot, surely, be jealousy? He loves you alone; as you—although you own it not—love him."

"I have owned it; and next week, I hope to own it publicly," said Gabrielle.

And, this time, Lady Louisa did take notice.

"You cannot deceive me, Gabrielle. You know to whom I refer. Not to Mr. Gordon—

that cold, sharp young man"—Lady Louisa shuddered, remembering her interview with James—"but to your first love—my dear, your dear, Charlie. To-day I am come to tell you that, even yet, you can retrace your steps; that, if you will resign your dreams of *lucra* and of gaud, and will consent to be freed from this terrible engagement—"

"What terrible engagement?" said Gabrielle.

"I"—continued Lady Louisa—"will receive you; harbor you in my own house. People will talk, no doubt; ill-natured reports will be spread; but what will this be to the joy of your deliverance? I am come prepared to take you back with me now—"

"Back with you now!" An exclamation of unmitigated horror had nearly escaped Gabrielle.

"Back to peace. Back to a home. Thence—with my assistance—you can write to Mr. Gordon, and explain, that the intervention of an experienced and broken-hearted friend has opened your eyes, and has shown you that it would be perjury to—"

"Lady Louisa!" said Gabrielle, rising; "forgive me; but I can hear no more of this."

Then, as Lady Louisa stared, taken by surprise, she went on:

"I believe that your intentions, at any rate, are kind; or I could not bring myself to tell you what, once for all, I now do tell you: that I have never loved any one in the way which you mean, excepting James, my future husband; and that I shall love him only, forever."

Her eyes shone, as she spoke; her color brightened. Lady Louisa gazed helplessly; and thought of calling to her sweet Euphrosyne to ring the bell—for Gabrielle was hysterical. But, fortunately, at this juncture, the clock happened to strike; and diverted her attention. She rose, observing that she had not thought it was so late; she was expecting friends at home; she must go. All that remained was to hope that Gabrielle might be happy. Gabrielle had chosen her own path; repentance had been offered and refused. Her friend could only hope—in a voice which signified that it was hope against hope—that Gabrielle might be happy.

"Thank you," said Gabrielle; "humanly speaking, there seems no doubt of it."

Lady Louisa sighed, and solemnly embraced her, much as an injured benefactress might bid farewell to a criminal *protégée* about to ascend the gallows. And then, for the space of a minute, she stood, her fat hands folded on her fan, regarding Gabrielle, as that benefactress might re-

gard that *protégée*, sorrowful, yet forgiving. And then she sighed again, again oscillating the flaxen ringlets; and then she murmured: "I bear no malice, my child. My sympathies will be ever at your command." And then—just as Gabrielle began to fear that she had thoughts of resuming her seat—she turned and went softly away.

"My sweet Euphrosyne," said she, when she was shut up with her daughter in the carriage, "I shall permit you and your innocent young sister to rank among that wretched young creature's bridesmaids, solely on account of the awful practical lesson which I expect the scene to afford. Now mark my words, and take warning for your own time, when it comes: 'tis hard to give the hand, Euphrosyne, where the heart can never be."

"But, mamma, Gabrielle and Mr. Gordon are devoted to each other. Every one says so; and her face is sunshine itself."

"I do not expect to be heeded, my sweet Euphrosyne," said Lady Louisa, smoothing her ringlets. "The young abhor counsel. It is their nature; and one must not blame them. Can you, without fatigue, pick up my fan?"

Charlie was often, at this time, sorely embarrassed, not to say annoyed, by the ostentatious compassion which his aunt appeared to consider his due. She would gaze at him for five minutes together, while he chatted with his cousins; and then, suddenly turning away, would sigh, and murmur under her breath, "Poor Charlie!" Or she would open a book of poetry, hunt out some consolatory passage, and, beckoning him to her side, read it aloud, in a sentimental tone. Or she would treat him as an invalid, and gently reprove her sweet Euphrosyne for seating herself, when he was by, in the most comfortable chair; and at meals implore him to eat, at least enough to support nature; whereas he was probably, at that very period, engaged in eating considerably more. These delicate attentions, being often repeated, became at length so burdensome that the young man began to fight shy of Lorton; and Lady Louisa, shaking the flaxen ringlets, lamented to Euphrosyne that their gay-hearted Charlie was fast subsiding into a soured recluse.

All this while—to exchange fancy for reality—Charlie was manfully battling with the apathy which at first threatened to overwhelm him, and to persuade him that nothing worth living for remained to him any more. The struggle speedily told upon his outward appearance. His youthful ruddiness faded to an indefinite sunburnt hue; he lost flesh; and over the simple, honest coun-

tenance stole a shade of sadness which bad to become habitual.

Gabrielle observed it, and she tried to be kind and loving to him; but, restrained by secret consciousness, asked no questions, no remarks. Mr. Morris observed it; and his heart ached. Cissy observed it.

"Mr. Godfrey," said she, one day, having countered him in the park, "Mr. Godfrey, think me rude; but—you are looking so out of sorts, at least—I feel it my duty mind you that, in this 'ere world, if we keep our spirits up to the mark, we must sionally flog them up to it. And—forgive would not your spirits be the better for a flogging, now?"

"Sometimes, you see, Miss Gordon," Charlie, with a faint smile, "one's spirits away altogether. In that case, one can't g them, even to flog."

"Nonsense," said Cissy, frowning. "never cut away altogether. They skulk, now then; and they should at once be hunted punished, and set to work again."

"Yes; when you have no particular wor is all very well to talk of the duty of per cheerfulfulness, and so forth. But there times—"

He paused, glancing at his companion. dark, bright eyes were turned in his direc and so pretty she looked, so winning—for h gentle and so sympathizing—that his suddenly melted. He went on, talking a words came.

"There are times when it is as much fellow can do to get along at all. Such as he has is employed in that; his spirits fare as they may."

"Yes, I know, Mr. Godfrey. This wor certainly a most tantistical—I mean tantali world. All the things in it seem to be t upside down or inside out; and so to go h ing hither and thither, just as the fancy them. They run against each other; and knock each other down; and they produ manner of awkward accidents. I believe l wrong about the spirits; I beg your pardon

"No; I think, so far as you went, you right. I hate to see a fellow pull a long every time that his affairs don't go quite would have them. Generally speaking, we' bound to look on the bright side; only, not then—"

"Now and then, we can't: which brings us to our starting-point. This is arguing in a cir

and Cissy. "Don't think me an utter heathen; but when I look round, and see all the bothers; nice people who are wretched, and the nasty ones who are cock-a-hoop, and so on, I feel so sorry—as if I could hardly bear it! It does seem like a shame."

"Miss Gordon, you shouldn't say that," answered Charlie. Cissy pouted.

"Don't be cross with me, Mr. Godfrey," she said in a spoilt-child tone. "Why shouldn't I say it? I wouldn't teach it to my Sunday-school class, you know; but you are not in my class. And if I feel it—"

"You should try not to feel it," replied Charlie in his downright manner.

"But, Mr. Godfrey, I possess two points in common with Susan Nipper: 'I am not a stock; I neither am I a stone.' I can't look on things as things and no more. I must feel something."

"Well, then—feel patient."

"But I've got no patience in me. And what am I to be patient for? The coming of the Cocqueres? Because I don't believe that the Cocqueres will come; whatever Kingsley may say."

"I grow in years, Mr. Godfrey, I grow in wisdom. Without trust, one can't be patient; and now the world too well, now, to trust it."

"You quoted Dickens, a moment ago. There is a sentence—in 'Bleak House': 'I think of it so often. 'Not this world; oh, not this! The world it sets this right.'"

Cissy was silent: and a long pause ensued.

"Mr. Godfrey," she said, at length, speaking impulsively, and drawing a little, a step, nearer to Charlie; "Mr. Godfrey, I do so wish that I could make you happy again!"

"Thank you, Miss Gordon," was Charlie's sole reply. But somehow he felt strangely soothed.

"I hope you won't stop coming to Farley, because Gabrielle is married. It will relieve my anxiety to talk about her; for I expect to be miserable all the winter. I have grown so used to her that I shall feel like a chrysalis minus the shell."

"There is certainly a wonderful charm about her," he said. And Cissy, seeing that he was content in the state to find a melancholy satisfaction in speaking and hearing of Gabrielle and Gabrielle's good qualities, proceeded—strolling by his side, in a highly-improper manner—to enlarge for three-quarters of an hour, at least, upon these painful themes.

"Poor fellow!" she thought: as, afterward, she slowly mounted the stairs to her own room; it is a shame, whatever he may say. And yet

—no, he is right; I ought not to feel that; and it won't be a shame in the end. There! he's taught me a lesson.—I'll try to comfort him, though; yes, I will—with all my might and main. He shall talk about Gabrielle till he makes me sick; perhaps longer—but that depends! And I'll chatter, and raise his spirits, and hunt out books for him. I wonder if 'Cecil's Visit to the House of Mourning' would be any consolation? I fancy not; and my giving it might look personal. However, I'll do what I can. More, I cannot."

And Cissy, the unusual gravity of her steps relaxing into a dance, flew down the corridor, singing:

"Weep no more, Charlie, weep no more!
Thy sorrow is in vain.

For girls once married, the heaviest sighs
Will ne'er make single again!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Art is much, but love is more.
O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but love is more!
Art symbolizes heaven, but Love is God,
And makes heaven."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

"BLESS me, my dear!" said Mrs. Barber: "you do ought to be 'appy, indeed! What a house this is! I had pictured nothing half so grand! And all in such style, too! I only hope it mayn't spoil Jenny for 'ome!"

"She will be here too short a time," said Gabrielle, smiling. "'And there's no place like home,' after all, you know."

"Well! I trust she'll think so. But now I want to hear all about you, my love. And how! how sly you've been! Why, this must have been brewing all the while you were at Eversfield; and yet, as I mentioned to Mr. Barber, never a word did you once 'int on the subject! What's more, I had no guesses; which was mortifying; for, between you and me, I pride myself on being rather sharp in those matters. And Mr. Barber—good gracious me, my dear! how Mr. Barber did laugh at me! Only the day before we heard, 'ad I been saying: 'Mark my words, Mr. Barber: Gabrielle Wynn will never marry. There has she been, six months or more, in the 'ouse with that fascinating Mr. Gordon; and, bless you! if she were a block of marble, he couldn't make less impression! Mark my words, Mr. Barber,' I said; 'Gabrielle Wynn is not of a marrying sort.' Well! the very next morning, came your letter. Lor'

me, my dear! I never was more put about in my life. And 'ow Mr. Barber did laugh! Oh, 'ow he did laugh!"

Mrs. Barber laughed herself; long and loud: and Gabrielle could not help joining.

"Now, my dear, will you be kind enough to tell me the names of some of these people? I feel that bewildered among them all, I hardly know where I am! As I said to your cousin Cissy—by-the-by, Gabrielle, what a remarkably pretty girl that Cissy is!"

"Yes—and remarkably nice, too."

"She looks it. And so stylish! Such an air! I can't keep my eyes off her. And those young ladies there, my dear: who are they?"

"Those are Jessie and Bertha Gordon. I told you about them, when I sent you the list of my bridesmaids."

"Ah! to be sure. There's a strong look of the family in them. Not quite so stylish as Miss Cissy: but very well, very elegant, take them all together. And that old gentleman with the floppy coat?"

Thus, greatly, to her own satisfaction, Mrs. Barber questioned and commented, until Cissy—seeing from afar that Gabrielle was tired—contrived to decoy her away.

The last evening of Gabrielle's maiden life was drawing to a close. A large party was assembled in the drawing-room; the house was full of friends and relations: the majority of whom were entire strangers to her, before—a few hours ago—she was introduced in the capacity of bride-elect. It had been an exciting day; and now she had contrived to slip into a quiet corner, half hidden by the harp: where she might, for a little while, sit silent, and think of the morrow.

But no sooner was Mrs. Barber gone, than she was pounced upon by the two shy girls: whose congratulations, instantly poured forth, were eager, fresh from the heart; and full of awe. Cousin James—oh dear! would not Gabrielle feel it a great honor to be his wife? They had always felt it an honor to be his cousins merely! And then—would not Gabrielle have to read a great deal, to be able to talk to him? And would not the contrast tempt her to despise other people? But oh dear! Jessie did hope that she would try not to despise *them*. To be despised by Gabrielle, would make them so very wretched!

They were still discoursing, and being reassured, upon this subject, when Olivia summoned them to play a duet; and Gabrielle was once more alone.

"Happy?" said a voice at her elbow
"Happy?"

She looked up; and saw Mr. Morris.

"Thank you, I am very happy indeed, answered. He seated himself beside her; during several minutes, surveyed her in silence.

"Shouldst Thou, to try me"—Know
Eh?"

"I think not—" said Gabrielle, only half understanding. On he went, without further delay, in his dreamy, sing-song tones: swaying self backward and forward, and gazing, as far into scenes unknown.

'Shouldst Thou, to try me,
With all supply me,
Nature requireth,
Or heart desireth—

Whisper this counsel of love in my breast:
God is the greatest,
The fairest, the sweetest—
God is the purest,
The truest, the surest—

And of all treasures, the noblest and best."

That," said Mr. Morris, bending toward her
"is a fact."

"I know it," said Gabrielle, gently.

"You know it? Happiness won't hurt then. Be as happy as you like."

He rose; but still hovered round her elbow.

"You ought to be very thankful, Miss W. So many disappointed! So many hungering thirsting—in vain, all their lives, for this: that has come to you at the beginning of life. All will be right There, no doubt. But—you ought to be very thankful, Miss Wyn."

He turned abruptly, and vanished; and Gabrielle saw no more of him. But she was haunted by his words; and with them came thoughts of Charlie. Charlie had not been disappointed. Charlie was not hungering and thirsting.

She herself, by-the-by, was hungering thirsting for something—some one, rather, a moment. She wanted James. He had only before dinner returned from London. Very soon he would go away again. She wished that he would come to her for a little while—she could sleep so much more peacefully. Where was Oh, at the farther end of the room: sitting Olivia. Olivia was talking; he was silent thoughtful—very thoughtful: as Gabrielle, well versed in his moods, discerned. Suddenly he looked up, looked in her direction; their eyes met—he saw, he smiled at her.

"Thank God"—thought Gabrielle—"that I have lived to be smiled on so!"

The craving for his presence, for one short talk with him, increased. She rose restlessly, left her corner, and went to a table where Cissy and another young lady were turning over photographs.

"What cathedral is that, Cissy?" she asked; but paid no attention to the answer.

"Gabrielle," said James's voice at her side. An exclamation of "Oh, how glad I am!" trembled upon her lips. She restrained it just in time.

"Gabrielle, I want to speak to you. Come here—out of the way of those girls."

He retired to a little distance; she followed, willingly enough: although conscious that Cissy was looking satirical, and that the young lady was watching, under cover of her hand.

"Gabrielle, I shall have to go directly; and I have seen nothing of you."

"You will see enough of me after to-morrow," said Gabrielle, blushing and smiling.

"Yes, but—these next fourteen hours! I must get you alone for a few minutes. Could not you contrive to slip away, presently—to the school-room? I will follow as soon as possible."

Gabrielle agreed; succeeding, by judicious management, in escaping unobserved. The school-room candles were not lighted; and the fire was low. She stood in the dusk, resting her forehead against the cool marble of the mantelpiece, and waited.

A step in the hall; the door was gently opened; James entered, walked straight to the fireplace, and, without a word, drew her to a seat upon the low sofa which stood close by. Then he sat down beside her, and took her into his arms. Just under her head, she felt his heart—beating impetuously.

During several minutes, there was silence. Suddenly, James heaved a deep sigh.

"Oh, this is something like rest:—at last! Gabrielle, if you only knew how I have been craving, all the week, every hour of the week, for you!"

"And so have I for you," she ventured shyly to whisper. But he did not seem to hear her.

"Once—I could not have believed it. You have transformed my whole nature. All within me, since I knew you, is changed. But I am not sure—" he added, under his breath—"that it is changed for the better."

"What do you say?" asked Gabrielle, not catching these last words. James was silent; and she did not repeat the question. She was content to be silent also: thinking only of the

bliss of being so near him, of feeling his arms so close about her, of knowing that he so loved her, of hearing him so speak.

Far other thoughts, meanwhile, were stirring in the heart which she still felt, beating so passionately, beneath her head.

"This that I dreaded—" he mused—"is come. I am completely under her power. My life, all that I practically value in my life, is bound up in her, and in her love. She is my world, the pulse of my existence. And is not this according to my fears? Has not passion taken possession of me, blinding my eyes, perverting my judgment, yes, and drawing down my aspirations? Once, my mind was occupied by subjects of real importance, subjects in some degree befitting the dignity of man. Now this young, weak girl—" and he looked down on her—"absorbs me utterly. I cannot think a thought in which she does not mingle; I cannot wish a wish in which she has no part. I cannot enter her presence without feeling this wonderful magnetic power: that draws me irresistibly; that forces me to acknowledge her as, against my will, my sovereign, my conqueror.—And shall I remain contented with this thralldom? For thralldom it is. Yes, though the chains be perfumed, golden even, they are chains still. Shall I passively submit to them? . . . Never!" and Gabrielle felt a sudden, almost convulsive tightening of the clasp that enfolded her hand. "Never must any external power govern me. I will be my own master: I will be self-sufficient: whatever the cost. I will fight against this—this infatuation, to the death; and I will conquer."

The clasp relaxed; he sat calm, pale, determined. Afterward came the reaction.

"My darling—my precious darling—" he breathed, half aloud: then, in his soul, went on:

"For a little while, at least, thou mayst be to me what, God knows, I would keep thee ever, if I could also keep my self-respect! For a little while, I may bend to thee, give myself wholly up to thee: and so I will. The struggle will come soon enough. Meanwhile, I will be happy . . . and make thee happy."

And, again looking down on her, a thought crossed him. The love was not all on his side. How would she regard the change which must ultimately come?

"Gabrielle—" said he—"supposing after a time, when the first flush of our happiness is over; and we return to the common routine of life: supposing—I cannot answer for myself—that I found it necessary—on account of my

writings, and so forth—to leave you often alone; to shut myself up, away from you; in fact, to seem, as compared with my former conduct, neglectful, even indifferent: supposing this, what would you think, Gabrielle? how should you take it?"

He paused, in some anxiety; the more so, since her answer was long in coming.

"I think—" she said, at last—"I think and hope that I should take it as a natural transition: such as, sooner or later, most people, I suppose, must go through—from the romance to the business of life. Of course I don't expect that your love for me will show itself, always, exactly as it does now. And I know what grand projects are in your mind; and, James, I will try—indeed, I will try—never to be exacting, or jealous of your time, or an encumbrance in any way. What I want . . . what I desire above all things . . . what I lay awake nearly the whole of last night, praying for . . . is . . ."

She hesitated; some strong emotion choked her voice.

"Is—?" repeated James, bending his head.

"To be a good and faithful wife to you—" and she clung closer to his breast—"to further, not to hinder, all that you do, good or great; to live, not to myself, but, under God, to you, who are better than myself; and at last"—her tone faltered—"when life here is done, to rise with you, to heaven . . . for evermore."

She clasped his hand, and, by an uncontrollable impulse, raised it to her lips. And he felt it bedewed with her tears, her holy tears. He drew her nearer, but more reverently, to his heart—as one might draw an angel: and in that moment broke on him a conviction, that, not philosophy, not knowledge, not any thing merely of the intellect, but love—love that he had despised—was the highest heritage of man. He saw, as by an inspiration, that while philosophy reforms, love regenerates; that while knowledge, on earth, at least, is finite, love is infinite; that the substratum, as it were, the fundamental idea of the universe, the principle from which all other ideas radiate, as from a centre, is the principle of love. And that in this, as in most human things, are varying degrees—certain of which are generally necessary for the full attainment of the rest. The baby knows only the love of his mother; to this a few years adds friendship; a few more, the tie that is "made in heaven;" and each contributes something toward the perfect development of the celestial love, the highest of all.

For the first time, it seemed to James that

the phase upon which he had now entered was surely one of the most divine among the earthly phases. Would he then be raising or sinking himself, when he forced it into an inferior place in his economy? This question staggered him. He saw life, and the objects of life, in a new, a glorious light. But all at once he remembered that these feelings—every feeling connected with Gabrielle—had come on him unawares, without any effort of will; in fact, against his will. This—why, this was pleasure, delight! There was nothing in this to be proud of; nothing to exult over; no loophole for the laurels of self-mastery.

The window which had suddenly opened in his soul, and had let in it a gleam from Infinity, with equal suddenness closed, and the gleam was shut out. He remained where he had been before; but he was weary of reasoning; he determined, for the present, to rest satisfied with feeling. Feeling how sweet it was to sit thus at Gabrielle's side—her head upon his breast, his arms enclosing her; moreover, to know that, in a few hours, she would be entirely his own.

And stoicise as he might, resolve as he might, he yet found deep comfort in the knowledge that, after all, no stoicism, no resolution, could unclasp "the marriage-band," or unfit "the spousal ring," or unsay the solemn vows which to-morrow would unite them—her to him, and him to her—in the sight of God and man.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"So these lives that had run thus far in separate channels, Coming in sight of each other, then swerving and flowing asunder,

Parted by barriers strong, but drawing nearer and nearer, Rushed together at last—and one was lost in the other."

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

"HALF-PAST seven, Miss Wynn."

Gabrielle started from the dreamless sleep into which, after several wakeful hours, she had fallen; started, opened her eyes, and looked bewildered.

"Why are the bells ringing, Susan?"

Susan stared, simpered, smiled.

"They're a-ringing for you, I expects, Miss Wynn."

Then Gabrielle, fully awake by this time, recollected. It was her wedding-day.

She rose hastily, anxious to secure a few minutes of quiet, before the bustle should begin. When she was dressed she went to the window and there knelt, looking out. The morning was

somewhat dull—gray and dim; one which might not improbably end in rain. The park, beneath its leafless trees, lay still and sad, no living creature visible. But a flag waved from the church-tower, and the bells rang on, telling of hope and gladness beyond the power of trees, however bare, of skies, however dun, to blight or darken.

And Gabrielle, as she listened, recalled the time when she had first looked from that window; when, in all the landscape, the moon had seemed to her the one object that spoke of home. Now, there was not an inch of ground about the place, that she did not, for its owner's sake, love. A truer, a more congenial home, on earth, she could not picture. To her, as to Abraham, had been given an abiding portion in the land wherein she was a stranger.

Then she thought of her father—gazing far into the gray heights of sky, as though she expected to see that disembodied spirit smiling down on her and her happiness. Full as was her cup, one further drop was needed to crown it to the brim. She could not, even now, feel satisfied without her father's blessing. But she bowed her head, after awhile, and craved, instead, a blessing of our Father who is in heaven.

"How have you slept dear?" said Olivia, entering an hour later. "You look pale and tired. All this excitement is very bad for you; but it will soon be over now."

"Yes; it will soon be over. Come and sit by me on the sofa. I must say a few words to you before I go, and before the bustle begins."

Olivia sat down; and Gabrielle nestled to her side.

"Olivia, I have never thanked you for all your great kindness—"

"My dear Gabrielle!"

"No, let me speak. I have never thanked you; but I have felt it none the less. Ever since I knew you, you have treated me as if I had been your sister or your child; you have done all that you could to make up to me for my loss, to make me well and happy. And Olivia, I can never, never forget it; I shall be grateful all my life; and you know what promises are made to those who are kind to the fatherless and the homeless."

"My dear little grateful child!" said Olivia, trying to stop her, yet feeling in her heart the sweetness of the knowledge that here, at least, she had succeeded in her constant endeavor to lighten the burdens of her fellow-creatures.

"And there is something more"—persisted Gabrielle. "All through my engagement I have wondered, more than I can tell you, at your generosity and unselfishness. What James has been to you, for years and years, I know—or I can guess; and now a stranger comes and takes him from you, and drives you out of your home. Yet I have never seen in you any jealousy, or mortification, or even regret. You have never said a word, or looked a look, to make me feel uncomfortable or intruding."

"If I had, it would be unpardonable."

"You think so, because you are so good. But I am sure that I could never, in your place, behave as you have behaved. Outwardly, you are always calm, but inwardly, I know, you have gone through many a bitter struggle. And, Olivia, though here you may be lonely, you will have a crown in heaven; I am certain of it; a bright, bright crown."

Olivia could not speak; she only drew Gabrielle closer.

"And I have just one thing more to say. You know, I believe, how"—her voice trembled a little—"how I love him—James. That alone would lead me to do all I could to brighten his home, to be a real 'helpmeet.' But, Olivia, the thought of you, and of your kindness, will seem to make this doubly incumbent on me. I shall know that it is the best way, the only earthly way, in which I can repay you. And I give you my solemn promise that I will ever strive to repay you so, looking to God for the strength and wisdom which I have not in myself. Will such a promise comfort you, dear Olivia?"

For answer, Olivia fell upon Gabrielle's neck, and wept; while Gabrielle, reversing for the time their respective positions, soothed her with a thoughtful consideration which did not often, nowadays, fall to poor Olivia's lot.

Their interview was quickly terminated, however. The gong sounded, and Olivia went down to preside at the first breakfast; Gabrielle, with Cissy for her companion, breakfasting, or making a feint of it, up-stairs. Cissy appeared with swollen eyes, and below them two deep, red marks; in which condition she made a violent rush at Gabrielle; and burst out crying.

"Well, Miss Cissy! if you go on in this way"—observed Talbot, who happened, just then, to enter; "if you go on in this way, all I can say is—your appearance will be a blemish in the procession."

And Talbot, who, being an old servant, felt herself at liberty to admonish Miss Cissy as she

chose, swept past them with a majestic glance in which contempt and a strong sense of injury were blended.

"Should I do it if I could help it, you stupid thing?" cried Cissy, stamping her foot. Then—amused, in spite of herself, at her own impetuosity—she broke, her face still covered with tears, into a peal of laughter: which subsiding, she cried again—and afterward laughed again; somewhat to Gabrielle's alarm.

"Oh, those noisy bells! they'll drive me mad. I wish they would hold their tongues. Gabrielle, why did I ever see you? Or, since that was inevitable, why did you take it into your head to marry James? Oh dear! it is so horrid. Horrid—horrid—horrid. What shall I do when you are gone?"—and a vehement hug ensued.

"You call me Undine; did not Undine cry her life away? Well, so shall I. When you come back, you will see a new fountain in the garden. Wilson will tell you that it is all that remains of Miss Cicely. A marble slab, erected near, will present the following inscription:

"Afflictions sore, long time I bore,
Olivia were in vain;
Till tears did please my woes to ease,
And I dissolved to rain."

Don't laugh, Gabrielle—indeed, I am in earnest. You don't know how I shall miss you."

"And I shall miss you, Cissy; very much. We must write to one another very often. I shall try to keep a journal of all that we do, and send it to you every week."

"Oh, I dare say, yes. Well, I know what the journal will be: 'Pau. December 15th. James rose early, and read till breakfast-time. In the evening, he walked out, found the midges troublesome. Do you know of any receipt for nets to cover the face?—December 16th. James had a headache. It went off after luncheon. He said that he thought the Pyrenees very pretty. Since then I have looked at them with increased delight.—December 17th. James again surveyed the Pyrenees, and said that they were very well; but he believed, if he had only time, he could cut them into a better shape. Since then, they offend my eye; I am not sure that I should call them in good taste.—December 18th. James was again worried by midges, and confounded them several times. I felt so glad that I was not a midge!' Etc., etc. James—James—James—eternally. That is the sort of journal you would make."

"You think so, do you? Wait till you see."

"I'd rather not see, if he's to fill it. What does he mean, I should like to know, by taking you away in this selfish manner, all alone? Since you must go abroad, why shouldn't we make a party, and be jolly?"

And Cissy shook her fist.

"Oh, Cissy! do be quiet. What will Talbot say?"

"I don't care what Talbot says, or what any one says. I hate the world and everybody in it, except Mr. Godfrey. Don't look at me, Gabrielle; or I shall cry again. My eyes are turning into watering-pots—leaking ones too. I hate watering-pots, and I hate eyes, and I hate everything," cried Cissy, stamping.

"Cissy, darling, time is getting on. We shall soon be in church. I want to realize it all; do help me."

"I would if I could, dear; or if crying and realizing weren't one. Here—I'll read you something. Give me that Prayer-book."

And Cissy, steadying her voice with some effort, read in such a manner as showed that, light though she appeared, she could, when she chose, enter into the deepest and the gravest feelings; the Psalms for the day.

Soon—too soon—afterward, the breakfast down-stairs came to an end; and the confusion began. Cissy was summoned to don her festal robes; Talbot appeared to dress Gabrielle. And while her fingers worked, Talbot talked; told how the village was turned topsy-turvy; how people were already flocking, in their Sunday clothes, to the church; how flags were everywhere flying, arches everywhere erected; and, last not least, how a committee of ladies had been instituted, to devise and to execute various projects of a complimentary nature. Talbot understood that a dozen school-girls had been chosen to stand at the entrance of the porch and strew flowers before the bride and bridegroom, as they left the church. Talbot had heard—in confidence—that the ladies had provided exotics. Nobody thought any thing too good for Mr. Gordon or his wife. He was set wonderful store by, was Mr. Gordon.

Presently Olivia reëntered; then Cissy; then Mrs. Barber's voice at the door, said, "Might I be permitted?" The room began to fill, and Gabrielle to grow excited; her eyes brightened, her cheeks burned. She was ready now; she stood in her bridal dress; the usual white silk, with a plain tulle veil reaching almost ^{to} her feet, and the wreath of fragrant orange-blossoms ^{she} encircling her soft brown hair. ^{light}

"Now, ma'am," said Talbot, adjusting the mirror—"look!"

Gabrielle did look; and a thrill of happiness, almost of rapture, darted through her mind. For the first time, under this new aspect, she saw in the face and form which met her eye, something not utterly unworthy to be matched even with his.

After this, all—so it seemed to her—was confusion and bewilderment. Presently, she found herself being driven across the park, Olivia by her side, and Mr. Lascelles opposite. The day had brightened; the sun was shining through the window. Now the carriage had stopped at the lych-gate. Mr. Lascelles was conducting her, under a succession of arches, down the long path—all carpeted—that led to the church. And before, behind, everywhere, were faces; eager, curious, interested faces. Gabrielle was conscious of a hum of voices, of whispered comments; she was glad to take refuge in the friendly shade of the porch. Here the bridesmaids were waiting; and a pause of some minutes followed, while the procession formed. Then some one—Mr. Lascelles, she fancied—asked if she were ready; she returned a mechanical yes, and, immediately, the church doors were thrown open—the organ pealed into sudden melody—and the choir, so perfectly in unison as to give the idea of one grand angelic voice, began the marriage-hymn:

"The voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest wedding-day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not passed away."

The next moment, Mr. Lascelles was leading her down the nave. Green leaves and flowers everywhere; the pews and the side aisles one living mass of men, women, and children; far on, a smaller band, a few figures standing together. She tried to distinguish James; but all seemed hazy: her eyes failed; it was like a dream.

"Be present, awful Father,
To give away this bride,"

sang the choir. At that instant, Gabrielle found herself standing before the communion rails, by James's side. There was a white rose in his button-hole; she thought of the scene in the conservatory; then wondered how she could have thought of such a scene at such a time! Then, as they still stood, waiting for the conclusion of the hymn, she ventured one upward glance into his face. And somehow, with this, the dreamy feeling fled, the mist passed from her eyes, composure returned.

"Till to the Home of gladness,
With Christ's own Bride they rise."

So the strain ended. The last solemn Amen rang out, and died away. The echoes faded from the aisles, from the roof. The service began.

A little—just at first—Gabrielle trembled. Her "I will" was scarcely audible, here—above, where the heart makes the voice, it sounded, doubtless, clear and bold. But afterward; when her hand was clasped in James's hand, and he was telling her that he took her to be his wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death them did part: she gathered courage. For it seemed to her that they stood alone, he and she—in some bright world, all light and joy: alone, save that God was with them, binding them in one. And when her turn came, her voice no longer faltered. An old woman in a distant pew, was heard to ejaculate: "Bless her heart! but shoo means what shoo ses!"

It was over; the knot was tied: James and Gabrielle were husband and wife. Euphrosyne Pembroke watched their faces, as they came out of the vestry; and felt that her mother was right, that this wedding had taught her a lesson. It had taught her that real love—which Lady Louisa's sickly counterfeit had hitherto inclined her to despise—is a solid and a sacred thing; solid as the counterfeit is hollow, sacred as the counterfeit is contemptible.

Many an eye was turned in deep interest toward the pair; he so tall, so handsome, so distinguished-looking—she so slight, so graceful; both so young. No sooner had they reached the door, than out crashed the bells again; while a cheer worthy of Yorkshire, burst from the churchyard. And before them fell, like a shower, the beautiful rare flowers which the committee of ladies had purchased—myrtles, orange-flowers, oleanders, ipomeas; the little school-girls smiling and glowing, and scattering with lavish hands. The sun, bright at first, was still brighter now. It beamed in Gabrielle's face; it irradiated James's dark eyes. Thus amid bells, cheerings, flowers, and sunshine, the husband and wife made their first entrance into the outer world.

The carriage, with true bridal show; gray horses, postillions, favors, white-gloved servants; was in waiting at the gate. Another moment, and Gabrielle was seated within. James followed; the door was shut. Yet another—he had caught her in his arms, with a passionate exclamation.

"Oh, Gabrielle—my darling—this moment—I have pictured it so often, scarcely daring to expect it; and now it is come! . . . Are you happy too, Gabrielle? Are you glad?"

"It is like heaven," murmured Gabrielle.

He paused, looking down on her. Then; his tone deepening:

"May God bless my own wife"—he said; "and in her, her husband; forever!"

And Gabrielle answered, "Amen."

"James!" said Cissy, solemnly, as, in the interval before the breakfast, he was standing behind Gabrielle's chair; "James! since this sweet girl has no mother to see after her, I feel it my duty to supply that mother's place; and to warn you of the extreme responsibility of the charge which you have undertaken. Gabrielle has been delicately nurtured; she has been guarded as one guards a precious gem.—This is the correct rendering, Olivia, isn't it?—She has now 'fopped her young affections' upon you. Prove yourself worthy of them. Take care of her. I appeal to your sense of honor."

"That is hardly necessary, I hope, Cissy. Thank you all the same, though."

"Never mind whether it was necessary or not. My soul is delivered.—Gabrielle, I wash my hands of you, from this time forward.—Well, Mrs. Barber! how did you like the wedding? I thought—though, being part of it myself, I ought not to say so—that it was a very pretty wedding."

"A prettier I never witnessed!" said Mrs. Barber, with emphasis; "and lor' me, Gabrielle! how well you behaved! I thought you'd faint, or cry, or something—sure to. But not one blessed tear did you shed."

"So much the better," said Cissy; "I always feel inclined to ask those crying brides, why they do it, then? As for their husbands—if I saw a wife of mine weeping her eyes out, all the time that I was swearing to make her happy, I should—don't be shocked, Olivia—box her ears."

"Lor' me, Miss Cissy! I'm thankful that Mr. Barber was not of your opinion. Good gracious! what floods I shed at my wedding, to be sure! And my mother! I verily believe that, between us, we might have filled the font.—Well, 'ow do you do, Mr. Godfrey? Overworking, I'm afraid. You look just as you did when you were growing."

"Oh, I'm all right, thanks," said Charlie, hastily.—"Gordon, I—I wish you joy." Then, regardless of observers, he turned to Gabrielle, and, bending toward her, wrung her hand.

"God bless you, Gabrielle," he murmured, holding it fast; "may you be as happy as I should have been, if—if—"

He paused; for his self-command was gone. She started from her chair.

"Come here—to this window. Charlie, you don't know how sorry I am to leave you. Please, please don't look like that. It grieves me so."

"Why, Gabrielle, you are crying! I should have thought that you would be too happy to care how I looked—now."

"Oh, Charlie! am I quite so selfish? Besides, how could I ever cease to care for you? I shall think of you every day, and hope that you are happy—happier."

Her eyes met his so wistfully, through their veil of tears, that Charlie's conscience smote him. He made a mighty effort, smiled, and spoke in a cheerful tone.

"Oh, I shall be happy enough, no doubt. When you come back, you'll find me working away like bricks. Work's awfully good for a fellow."

"Yes, that is your creed, I know; I hope that you will find it a true one. Only don't work too hard. And, Charlie—forgive me, I don't want to pry into your secrets, but—if you have any—any trouble, please remember the other creed, which you instilled into me: that all will come right in the end, for those who are patient, and do their duty. I know—I feel sure—that all will come right for you, Charlie."

"Thank you, my dear Gabrielle," he said, gratefully: and was about to say more, when James, stepping forward, proffered his arm to take her into breakfast. She was borne from poor Charlie's sight; he turned away, sick at heart: henceforth, the day would be a blank to him. The day? life, rather. So he believed.

The breakfast passed off as pass the generality of such breakfasts. At length, arrived the end: and the carriage. Gabrielle having previously retired up-stairs, returned, dressed for the journey. People crowded round her; Charlie—the crisis of his trial—had to "clasp her hand and part;" Mr. Morris bestowed on her a gusty benediction; the shy girls pressed forward to kiss her. Then followed by James—his usual composure somewhat abated by the farewell scene with Olivia—she stepped into the carriage; and away started the horses, at what Jeffries considered a wedding pace; amid a volley of old shoes. And throughout the park were arches, and cheers, and crowds; among whom, ever and anon, an eager voice cried, "God bless yer, Mester Gordon!"

or "God give yer yer health, missis, for t' squire's sake!" While at every door, and every window, all down the village, was a face—at some, many a face—of "the sick and the halt," the little children and the aged people, too feeble to walk to the park. From each, as the carriage passed, came a cheer—more or less powerful.

"How fond they are of you!" said Gabrielle; "and how guilty I feel!"

"Guilty, my child! Why?"

"For taking you away. Not from them only—from poor Olivia—turning her and Cissy out of Farnley—"

"And adding a fresh joy to my life, every time I look at you, every time you speak. But you are so pale, and so tired! Shall I tell you what I mean to do, the first thing to-morrow?"

"What?"

"To take you to Dr. W——, and make him give me a set of rules for your life abroad: your diet, as he will call it—medicines—hours—and all the rest."

"He will think you very absurd."

"Never mind. Think what he may, I shall get the rules; and you shall keep them. For remember—you have sworn to obey me—"

"But not Dr. W——"

"Dr. W——'s word will be my law. However, I don't care to be too strict, to begin with: we'll make a bargain. If you will promise to obey these rules throughout the winter, I will promise to take you in the spring, to see Venice, Naples, Rome—and any thing else you like. What do you say?"

"You may be sure that I should never say No, James, when Yes would get me to Venice!"

CHAPTER XLV.

"Here you may see Benedick the married man."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

It was a hot afternoon, toward the end of May. The London streets were all glare and dust. The foot-passengers traversed them with inflamed faces, and continual complaints; in the carriages, the ladies looked languid, the coachmen apoplectic; the horses weary of their existence, and of the flies. In short, the world was dead beat. Only Cissy was still cool, and fresh, and blooming.

"Olivia, Olivia!" she cried, entering the drawing-room—the drawing-room of Sir Philip Peers's house, in Berkeley Square, where she and

her sister were staying; "Olivia, the most delicious, delightful, enchanting, superb, charming, hightiest-tightest-galopscoiusest news in the world! To be had on guessing."

And Cissy, her hands folded at her back, performed the strathspey in front of Olivia's chair.

"My dear Cissy, pray keep still. How can you jump about, in this weather?"

"Olivia, have you any quicksilver in your composition? I wish I might dissect you and see. I'm sure I could put you together again; and I do so want to know. And—'jump about,' indeed! Jumping about is highly unladylike. I'm not jumping, I'm dancing a Scotch reel. So you will be, I believe, in another minute."

"By-the-by, it is just post-time. Have you heard from James? Yes, I see a letter in your hand. What does it say?"

"Suppose it says secrets?"—began Cissy; but, catching sight of Olivia's imploring countenance, she relented; tossing into her lap a foreign envelope.

"There, that's for you: from your beloved James. It came enclosed in this for me: from my beloved Gabrielle! which, by-the-by, I haven't read yet. I just took it out of the cover, caught sight of this enchanting news—and every thing else went out of my head."

"But what is the news, Cissy? Read the letter aloud."

"You have not opened your own."

"Never mind. I would just as soon hear the other first, and I know you are longing to read it."

"You dear unselfish old darling! Listen, then:" and Cissy began.

"COLOGNE, May 18, 18—.

"MY DEAREST CISSY: Please forgive my silence. I fear I am really very negligent about my letters; and the days fly by so quickly, and so busily—if I may call sight-seeing business—that I lose my count of time; and a week is gone before I have fairly realized that it is begun. I think we shall stay here some few nights longer; for there is a good deal in and about the place, that James wants to show me; so we mean to brave out the odors, and do it all thoroughly. And now I must tell you of our plans; which are at length finally fixed. We expect to be in England by the 3d or 4th, and our first destination is London; rather—I will privately confess to you—against my will; for I am tired of bustle, and afraid lest all this dissipation should spoil me for our quiet country life. However, James has set his heart on having me presented, and on making me au fait of a London season; so I keep

my objections to myself. Only I have made him promise to take me home directly after the drawing-room; and then—very soon—we want you and dear Olivia to come to us for a good long visit. Oh, how delightful it will be! you can't think how I am looking forward to it. Tell Olivia that she must say yes, or James will be angry, and I shall be miserable; not a very pleasant opening to our Farnley married life! I am longing to see you both; and I have so much to tell. I am sure that, when I once begin, I shall never stop talking. James (who is just come to look over me) begs to say that he is sure of the same; and glad equally, as it will save him a great deal of trouble.

"You ask me how I am. Thank God, I am quite well. James still takes the most absurd care of me—though I should not say 'absurd,' for I do really think that his care at Pau saved my life. He is so very strict about draughts, fatigue, etc., and I am almost fat, and so hardy! I believe I could not catch cold if I tried. He is most munificent to me as regards pocket-money, and I have got all manner of pretty things for presents. However, I won't anticipate: you will see them soon.

"Yesterday, in the cool of the evening, we walked to a little village, on the other side of the river. Every thing was lovely—the sky cloudless—scarcely a breath of air stirring. We found a pleasant little nook on the bank and sat down. Before us lay Cologne, with its steeples, its pinnacles, and strange, foreign-looking roofs, and the half-finished tower of the cathedral. And the murmur of it, etherealized and softened, came to us over the water; and behind us, in an inn-garden, a band was playing 'Wenn die Schwalben;' and presently, the glow that comes before sunset, began to steal over the landscape, and we saw all things through a medium of golden light. And the band ceased to play, but we heard the bells of some church on the opposite bank; which suited the scene still better. The very atmosphere seemed full of poetry and inspiration. If I were a poet, Cissy, or an artist, I should then have conceived something great; but I am neither, and my heart felt ready to burst for want of the power to express itself. When the sun had set, we walked slowly home, over the bridge of boats. I was very tired; but oh, such an evening was worth a life of tiredness! At least, so it seemed at the time.

"To-day is rainy, and I cannot get out; but James is going off to the Rathhaus again, and his *dear archives*—he has made some very valuable

notes. We are engaged to the Von Wieschels for this evening. It is the daughter's birthday; and we shall meet hosts of people. I am looking forward to it—all will be so new; and then I love going out with James. He is made so much of; and he looks so gentlemanlike and handsome, that he does credit to the English nation."

("I dare say! Much you care about the English nation! You are the essence of patriotism, aren't you? Why else did you marry James?")

"And now, dear Cissy, I must bring this scribble to a close. James says that so much stooping is bad for my chest, and that he won't leave the house until he has seen my desk put away; and I know he is longing to be at the Rathhaus. I shall be so very glad to see you—I can't help writing that once more. These last six months have been all holiday; too bright for this work-a-day world. I only hope that you may not find me very selfish and idle in consequence. The poor people at Farnley weigh on my mind. I feel so inexperienced—and so anxious that they should suffer as little as possible from the change of squires. Tell Olivia that I shall want a great, great deal of advice.

"With much love, I am ever

"Your affectionate sister,

"GABRIELLE GORDON."

"Now I would have kept the creature half an hour—upset my desk, and the ink, and all kinds of things: tormenting tyrant! If I might not write, he should not go to his Rathouse—or whatever it may be. But I always knew that Gabrielle would spoil him: she's so provokingly meek. Don't shake your head, Olivia! isn't it too delightful?—their coming home, I mean. Then the Farnley visit! I can hardly believe it!"

And Cissy inflicted several impetuous hugs—first upon her sister, and afterward upon Gypsy: who stood beside her, wagging his tail, and looking to the last degree sympathetic.

The last few months, to Gabrielle so bright, had been far from bright to Cissy. She had made the best of every thing; trying, so far as in her lay, to be a comfort to Olivia: but there had lately been many a moment when some comfort on her own account, would not have been ill-bestowed. In the first place, she had sorely missed Gabrielle. It was not perhaps, at this time, in Cissy's power to love more than a very few persons at once. But those few she loved heartily; and, capricious as she often showed herself, constantly. Among them, Gabrielle

ranked high; and after Gabrielle was gone, Cissy wrote in her journal—for she kept a journal, by fits and starts—that she was, like Mrs. Gummidge, lone, lorn creature, and everything might henceforth be expected to go contrary with her. Which assertions, considered in their essence, did verily, just then, express the prevailing state of Cissy's mind.

Not the least among her trials, was the necessity of leaving Farnley. For although, remembering Olivia's greater loss, she said but little of her own, a trial most grievous she did in fact find this necessity to be. She was not only strongly attached to the place, and to every thing about it, but the county, her native Yorkshire, appeared to her the only county in which she could ever feel herself at home. She took with her the wild pony and Gypsy; and her brother-law's park at Enderby was almost as extensive, and quite as secluded, as that at Farnley: she might still, therefore, roam or ride, according to her fancy. This was consoling; yet the sore longings of the *heimweh* were often sorely felt by Cissy, at Brierley Lodge.

Olivia, when once the wrench was over, began to revive. She was devoted to Annie, a great favorite with Sir Philip, and she found in the children objects of ceaseless interest. Moreover, her mind, by nature calm, had, through long years of self-discipline, learned the art of reducing its expectations, its desires even, to the level of the circumstances in which she happened to be placed. That Cissy was young; and her discipline was yet, for the most part, to come; indeed, these, her first real experiences in the changes and chances of this mortal life, were probably its beginning. When Cissy and Annie, although sisters, had little, save affection, in common; and she thought Sir Philip weak; and the children were too proper and too well-behaved to suit her taste: so, as Olivia brightened, she pined.

Such being the case, it was not surprising that the tidings contained in Gabrielle's letter pleased her with delight. As to the day when the travellers arrived in England, and she went with Olivia to meet them, at James's town-house in Portman Place: of Cissy's delight then, we need not speak.

James had brought his wife home, well, and comparatively strong. Of the terrible consumption her heritage, no outward token was left. The sickness was now a healthy fairness; the slightness was slightness, and not thinness. She still looked delicate, still fragile: but no more.

And happiness suited her face. It was a

sweeter face than ever. Gazing into her eyes was like gazing into calm depths of light; her lips, always mobile, seemed, at this time, ever ready to part in smiles. The pale, drooping little maiden of a few months back, might hardly be recognized in this bright young wife: one glance at whom was sufficient to prove that joy is a reality.

"You are not a bit matronly," said Cissy; "you are come back just the same insignificant little slip of a girl, that you went away."

"Am I? Well, it is something to be considered a girl, even! James is always calling me his 'child.'"

"What impudence! But that's a young man all over. Young men take such liberties. If I ever marry anybody—which I doubt—it shall be a Methusaleh. And then he'll have a hoary head. I should delight in a hoary-headed husband."

"You'd better advertise for one," said Gabrielle, laughing. "But, seriously, I could not bear to marry an old man. He would die so soon, you know."

"So much the better—I mean, the better for my constancy. Three, or, at most, four years of matrimony, would be quite enough for me. With great effort, I might stand five: but six—never! Now two young people together—you and James, for instance: you may have sixty or seventy years before you yet!"

"Sixty or seventy thousand would be none too many," said Gabrielle, with a little sigh.

"But, my dear! you can't have considered the matter. Seventy years; think what they are! Seventy times three hundred and sixty-five breakfasts, luncheons, dinners: always the same face opposite, always the same voice talking. It would kill me, Gabrielle. I'm certain of that. And time it should, too—since, I suppose, before I came to it, I should be approaching a hundred."

"My dear Cissy, what an Irish sentence!"

"I must have caught it of Mrs. O'Tallaghan, when she called this afternoon. But why am I wasting my time like this, when I have so much to ask you and to tell you? And, first and foremost, were you not glad to find yourself getting better?"

"More than glad: most deeply thankful. Oh, Cissy, I can't tell you what it was to feel my strength returning, and the pain in my side passing off. And then, when my cough began to go, and the constant dread, the shadow of death, abated—oh, that was true joy. And yet—"

"Well, dear?"

"Yet, I could not help reproaching myself, and thinking of that—'Willing rather to be ab-

sent from the body, and—"You know the rest, Cissy."

"My dear scrupulous child, Saint Paul said it; and you are not a saint—yet: though next door to one, I believe you are," muttered Cissy, in a parenthesis. "It would have been most unnatural for you to wish to die just then, to leave James almost in your honeymoon, and so on."

"Perhaps—" said Gabrielle, wistfully—"I hardly know. He was as bad. Those weeks when I was so delicate—he would not let me speak of death."

"No wonder, I'm sure," cried Cissy, with a shudder.

"It would be less painful now, I think; at least to me. Now, somehow, I feel more satisfied, more closely bound to him; too closely, indeed, to be ever parted, really—even so. But, then, we had hardly had time to settle into our new position; our happiness seemed scarcely begun. I felt as though I could not, could not, leave him. And at last Cissy, one day—"

"Go on, darling."

"You won't care for it."

"Never mind. Go on."

"One afternoon, at Pau, my heart was so full—it seemed too much to bear alone; and I might not speak of it to him; I had no one human to tell. So I went to my room, and locked the door, and knelt down, and poured out every thing, just as—if he had let me—I should have poured out every thing to James."

"You prayed, you mean?"

"No. It was not praying. I had prayed before. I had asked for life, and for resignation, and all that—many a time. But now I asked nothing; I only told it. Some wonderful Spiritual presence seemed to come near me, to enfold me; and I thought, 'He is my Creator, and He will understand.' So I just let the words flow out—and opened all my mind. My great love for my husband, and my fear lest it might be too great, and that I longed to feel rightly about death, and yet could not; all this, and more. And gradually peace came; how I can't describe, but in some wonderful, divine way. There was breathed into my soul a conviction that eventually all would be right; that my love would be brought into its proper place, my desires subdued—every thing as it ought to be. And then I knelt on, saying nothing, thinking nothing—only, as it were, reposing—until James came to the door and called me, and I went to him; and he said that I looked tired, and that he would read me to sleep. Well, I slept a long time, so hap-

pily, with my head upon his shoulder; and when I awoke my doubts and fears were gone. And, Cissy, they have never come back; that peace has never faded."

"Gabrielle, you go too deep for me. I cannot enter into these abstractions. I can hardly understand them, even. Am I very wicked?"

"Not wicked, Cissy. Natures differ, you know."

"Yes, that's true. Besides, I am Undine. My soul is yet to be found. It won't jump suddenly upon me, I fancy; it will grow by degrees. And I have some idea—though I can't be sure—that a bit of it has grown already."

"What gives you the idea?" said Gabrielle, laughing.

"Oh, nothing very definite. It is only that, lately, a change has come o'er the spirit of my dream. Not a pleasant change; my views of life are not brighter. But, somehow, I think they are deeper. Only a 'teeny, tiny' bit deeper, you know. Still—such as it is—I suspect that the soul, coming late, like one's wise teeth, might be at the bottom of it."

"But, now I look at you, I believe—You are not unhappy, dearest Cissy?"

"Just at this moment, my darling, I am on the top of the topmost pinnacle of the Castle of Delight. I have been climbing up to it ever since I heard that you were coming home; and now here I am. And very agreeable it is—only rather dizzy."

"But you have not been happy, I can see. I thought you liked Brierley Lodge, Cissy."

"Like it? Yes. You like Mrs. Edgecumbe, don't you?"

"I am very sorry," said Gabrielle, looking downcast. "I was afraid it would be so. If it could only all live at Farnley together—!"

"My dearest, we can't. Instead of wishing for impossible things, let us enjoy ourselves, and make the best of things as they are. You needn't look so guilty. I do believe that you consider yourself a hardened miscreant, just because James happened to marry you—which delighted us all by-the-by. Brothers always do marry; and sisters, in our circumstances, always do have to turn out. 'Tis the course of nature, my dear. And I am sure I feel myself heartily thankful that we are turned out for you, instead of for anybody else. That definite article, now! The bare idea is dreadful."

"James," exclaimed Cissy, next day, "what a naughty, wicked, extravagant little monkey that Gabrielle of yours is! She has brought with

"Such beautiful presents. In fact, she seems to have come home in a giving frenzy. I suppose she caught it of you."

"Of me! How?" said James.

"Why, I've just been looking at her things, and, for me!—as Mrs. Barber would say—they appear to be donations, and you the donor. I wonder she knocks under, and acts the model wife! She's sharp, and she sees what she'll get out of it. Now, if I were you, James, I'd vary my system—accustom her to bread and water, now and then, and so forth. That's the way to discipline character. Why, even I might, occasionally, obey my husband—if I had one—supposing that he rewarded me as you reward her. An unwise policy, James—a bad beginning of a bad business. Misfortune comes, swallows your money, and your hold on her is lost."

"I'll tell you what, Cissy: I'm thankful that she doesn't possess your tongue! Her hold on me would be somewhat precarious then, I fancy."

"If she possessed my tongue, dear boy, she would possess my mind; and if she possessed my mind, she would never have married you. So there'd be no hold to lose, you see—luckier for both parties!"

"And, to pursue the matter, if she possessed my mind, I should never have asked her to marry me; so the argument melts into nothingness. But really, Cissy, this is rather too soon to begin quarrelling. I beg your pardon, and I want you mine; let us 'kiss and be friends.'"

"I'll kiss you, my esteemed relative, with all pleasure in life; and I'll be as much your friend as I ever was. But as to pardoning and quarrelling, I ignore both. I simply and dispassionately stated certain facts. If you like to call it quarrelling, you may; I beg to differ. Thanks, James. One kiss is enough. Remember weather."

"I am glad you are not Cissy, Gabrielle," said James, when next they were alone.

"What a strange speech, James! Has Cissy offended you?"

"Hardly that;" and he smiled—the provocative superior smile of old. "She is only a little much for me. A good deal too much for me would be if she were my wife."

"I wonder how it is," said Gabrielle, after a few minutes of abstraction, "that neither of us seems able to appreciate the other. Now, my mind, Cissy is charming. I have so enjoyed seeing her again."

"You enjoy every thing, my sweet, sweet girl."

"No, I don't, James; and Cissy is really—but never mind. I shall do my best to make you fast friends; as you ought to be, and as you will be, some day, I know."

"Well—perhaps; I can't tell. I can tell one thing—that I wish we were not to be so uncommonly sociable to-night. Olivia alone would be a different matter: but all those people!"

"All those people! Oh, you inhospitable boy! There will be only, besides Olivia, Philip, and Annie, and Cissy."

"Yes, I believe I am very absurd. But the fact is, I have had you so entirely to myself, that—that—"

"Well?"

"Gabrielle, what does that little Scotch song of yours say—?"

"I'm jealous of what blesses her—"

The summer breeze that kisses her—

The flowery beds

On which she treads—

Though was for one that misses her!"

"James, you are growing silly. I must call you to order. And, to begin with—go upstairs; it is time to dress."

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Ay, memory has honey-cells!
And some of them are mine."

M. H.

"To every thing"—says Solomon—"there is a season; and a time for every purpose under heaven." On Gabrielle's life had now dawned a time for rejoicing—rejoicing unalloyed, perhaps, as rejoicing can be, this side the grave; a time to love and to be loved—without any shadow of separation, or of poverty, or of jealousy, to come between. Every hour, at this period, was a poem to her; every event, however trivial, brought something of beauty; left an echo, as of sweet music, which lingered on:

"Our little systems have their day,

They have their day, and cease to be."

Few lives of any length, probably, transpire without an episode—it may be of years, it may be of months, more commonly of weeks or of days—an episode such as that through which Gabrielle was now passing. Foretastes of a brighter world, from this they quickly fade; but behind them remains one blessing which, while reason survives, fades never. The man who prayed—"Lord, keep my memory green!"—was a wise man; and a happy man. In days of sor-

row, desolation, pain, or—sometimes more trying than either—of dry stagnation; we may, in memory, still possess those halcyon days of old; and gather from them hope and faith for the days to come.

So often after it had passed away, Gabrielle found solace in looking back to this first sweet part of her wedded life. And perhaps there was no portion of it which she loved better to recall than the month or two immediately following her return from the Continent. The three weeks spent in London; James's popularity; the delight of going out with him, of seeing and hearing him in company with Mr. Savill and other men of literary celebrity; her pride in their evident appreciation—admiration, rather—of his talents. The music; the pictures; the Crystal Palace; the beautiful girls; the drives in the park; the general gayeties; all perfectly charming to her, because all were new. Her pleasant chats with Cissy; Olivia's kindness; James's devotion—she could give it no other name. Then the drawing-room, and the return to Farnley; the first joyful consciousness of being at home; the village welcomes and festivities. The *tête-à-tête* fortnight with James, before the arrival of his sisters; the rides and walks; the books which he read to her, the songs which she sang to him. The long summer evenings—especially the twilight part of them; when he would play to her on the chapel-organ—melodies grand, or sweet, or dreamy; when they would talk—as only the young and the happy can talk—over all imaginable subjects; “things sacred, and things profane; things past, and things to come; things foreign, and things at home;” ever, even at the gravest, ready to branch into mirth; never, even at the gayest, losing that undertone of thoughtfulness, which equally, although somewhat differently, characterized both their minds.

And when James was no longer a bridegroom, when that year of indulgence which he had allotted to himself, was over; then Gabrielle, hungering and thirsting for some demonstration of his love, delighted to remember how abundant, once, such demonstrations had been. How gentle, how tender, had been his manner; what interest he had taken in all that interested her; how kindly he had entered into any little fears or scruples, such as Gabrielle was prone to—sympathizing, consoling, smoothing all away; never contemptuous, never unconcerned, never bored.

Little or nothing in common, to all appear-

ance, was there between the ardent young hand of these days, and the cold philosopher of days to come. But the one character had at least, no power to obliterate the other. The coldness of the latter was at its height; the former, ardent as ever, lived still in Gabrielle's heart; and helped to keep it warm.

Charlie Godfrey was absent, on a holiday, when the young couple returned to Farnley. Gabrielle made many inquiries of Mr. J. concerning him. And she learned that he had left Meddiscombe, not merely for a holiday, but also, by medical advice, for change of a scene. He had been working too hard; he had parish all day, and sitting up to read at night; both his spirits and his health had suffered. Dr. Wallace had announced that only two months of entire rest could save him from breaking altogether.

Gabrielle heard these particulars with interest—moreover, with many pangs of reproach; which James discerned.

“I fear”—he said, the same evening—“fear, Gabrielle, that my suspicions about Charlie were correct; and I believe—”

She looked up at him.

“I believe that you fear the same.”

“I—I have feared it lately—since our wedding-day.”

“Why particularly since our wedding-day?”

“Because, when he congratulated me in that manner . . . he said—”

“What did he say? He had no business to say any thing,” burst out James, a little fiercely.

“Oh James—that is not kind. He has loved beautifully, all through, I am sure; was only just at last, when—you know what came to me.”

Then she repeated poor Charlie's last speech.

“Poor fellow!” said James, his fiercer feelings melting; “I am very sorry. I pity him—his honor, I do—from the bottom of my heart.”

“And so do I,” cried Gabrielle, bursting into tears; “I hope—oh, James, do you think I love him? do you think I gave him cause to—”

“No no, my darling,” he said, caressing her, “you have no reason whatever to reproach yourself. It is one of those unfortunate things which nobody can help. Try to forget it—the relation will do him no good, and you harm none. Forget it—and don't cry; to please me, don't cry.”

But Gabrielle was thinking of all that had been to her at Eversfield—even at Fa-

w kind, dear, brotherly; how he had comforted
 r in her sorrow, had striven his utmost to sym-
 thize in her joy. And so thinking, she saw his
 e, clouded and pale; saw him toiling alone at
 ddiscombe: she contrasted his life as it was,
 th his life as he had hoped that it would be;
 th her own, made happy at his cost; and de-
 te James's entreaties, the tears flowed on, more
 terly than before.

"My child," he said at last; "if you take
 ngs to heart like this, your unselfish little spirit
 I soon wear itself quite out; and then, what
 all I do?"

"Unselfish, James! I am, any thing but un-
 fish. Here is poor Charlie—who was always
 good and kind—made miserable through me;
 ile I— if I had only known this sooner!"

"Sooner! What do you mean? Before you
 I I were married?"

"Before I ever saw you. I would have tried
 like him, as—as he liked me. I would have
 ed my best, and I might have succeeded—if I
 I known."

"Thank God, then, Gabrielle, that you did
 t know!"

She paused, half frightened by the vehemence
 h which these words were uttered. He rose
 tily to his feet, and stood before her: his full
 jestic height.

"Gabrielle, do you mean to say that you wish
 an sit deliberately there, and tell me that you
 I, you had married Godfrey, instead of me?"

"Oh, James, how could I? I hardly knew,
 t now, what I said. I was thinking only of
 arlie, and his unhappiness—"

"Go on."

"And if I had been engaged to him, or, at
 t, in love with him—which you would soon
 e seen—when I came to Farnley, you would
 er have thought of me. You would have mar-
 l some one else, of course; and—"

"Should I never have thought of you? Why,
 t was, until the last month, almost the last
 before our engagement, I was far from cer-
 n that you were not 'in love with him!' At
 time, Olivia was in the habit of mentioning it
 me as an established fact. Yet I loved you all
 same. It was my fate to love you."

"James—don't, don't look so reproachful. In-
 cl, when I made that unfortunate speech, I was
 king of Charlie only. If I had thought of
 or of myself, I never could have made it.
 ight have been happy with Charlie; but he
 d never have been to me—no one could ever
 o me what—"

"Well, Gabrielle?"

"What you are."

He sat down again by her side.

"You really mean that? You love me better
 than you would have loved him, if he had been—
 your husband?"

"James, why will you question me so?"

"You are too cold, Gabrielle," he said, pas-
 sionately; "you don't satisfy me. You have
 never satisfied me yet. I want more—more than
 you have ever given me. I want you to love me
 as I love you."

"I do, James. I am sure that I do."

"I am sure that you do not. Could I have
 made such a speech to you! Could I—even if a
 hundred women were breaking their hearts for
 me—which is more than *he* is doing, or will do,
 for you—could I ever, for one instant, regret that
 I have known you, have loved you? Never—
 never."

He started again, to his feet, like a restless
 spirit.

"No," he thought; "not even to escape the
 evil which I feared—nay, fear; which has indeed
 come upon me; not even to escape that, would I
 untie one-thousandth part of the knot that binds
 us; her to me, me to her."

Then, suddenly, standing once more before
 her:

"Gabrielle," said he; "do you know what I
 should have been, what would have become of
 me, if, as you have suggested, you had come to
 Farnley, loving him? Your marriage has been a
 blow to him, a disappointment; but he will get
 over it. I have watched him more closely than
 you suppose; and I believe I have formed a tol-
 erably accurate estimate of his affection for you.
 There was much of friendship, much of the broth-
 erly element, in it; it was deep, so far as it went;
 but it was quiet and patient. Beside mine, it was
 a torch beside a fire.—Don't interrupt me, Gabri-
 elle; I have not finished.—He is now trying hard
 to forget you; or, rather, those vain hopes con-
 cerning you. And he will succeed. In a year or
 two—perhaps sooner—the brotherly element will
 have absorbed the rest; he will be happy again;
 in all probability, will marry. Whereas, I—Ga-
 brielle, only God knows what I should have been,
 if you had disappointed me. I might—don't
 think this extravagant, I feel that I might—have
 made away with myself altogether. Or, if not
 that, I should have sunk into such depths as you,
 in your innocence, cannot even picture. I should
 not have cared for any thing, present or future;
 or for any one, human or divine; or have been

good for any thing, in this world, or in the next; any more."

He paused, for his voice had grown husky; and Gabrielle, with her earnest eyes, looked up into his face; half shuddering—sensible as never before, of the awful responsibility of this love: this wonderful, passionate love, which, without her seeking, had come to her. This man, whom she knew to be so talented; whom she believed to be so superior; he, it seemed, was dependent upon her, for happiness—almost for virtue! He stood there, so tall, so powerful-looking; and owned that dependence.

"James," she said—"it is terrible."

"What is terrible?"

"Your love for me. How can I ever—"

But there she stopped. A recollection suddenly struck her: a promise spoken long ago, but still, as then, true and sure.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

And, in that moment, strength came.

She rose, laid her hand upon his arm, and said, her tone very low and gentle: "James, do sit down by me, and be calm. I did not mean to rouse such a storm in you."

"It was a simple statement of facts, Gabrielle. And 'calm!' While you are so calm yourself, I cannot be calm. Your calmness maddens me."

She looked up at him once more; then, suddenly, throwing her arms all round him, clasped him tight.

"James"—she murmured—"my own husband—my dearest, next to God—"

He was softened; he sat down, drawing her with him.

"I can't show my love as you show yours, James—so passionately, almost wildly; it is not in my nature. But if you could see my heart, you would be satisfied—more than satisfied. And some day, James, when all may not be so bright with us as now; when an opportunity may come to me of bearing something for you, of doing something for you, of giving up something for you; then, perhaps you will see—and believe. For, James, I feel that I could bear, I could give up, I could do any thing, every thing, for you; every day, and every hour of the day, if it were needed."

She raised her arms to his neck, and drew down his face, and covered it with kisses; and as she did so—somewhat to her astonishment—a hot tear fell upon her forehead.

"My blessed child," he said, hoarsely; "I am not worthy of thee, nor of thy pure love."

It was many a long day since he had spoken a truer word!

One morning, about this time—an ideal August morning, still and sultry—Gabrielle, armed with a hat, a parasol, and a volume of "Friends in Council," had sallied forth alone into the garden; and finding a shady spot, at the foot of an old cedar, had seated herself on the grass, prepared for an hour's diligent reading. Half that hour had elapsed; she was deep in her book; when a sudden cough in her vicinity made her start, and look hastily up. Before her, in a deferential attitude, stood a gentleman—a stranger; he had evidently entered the garden from the house, crossing the lawn unheard. Her color considerably heightened, she rose to her feet, whereupon the gentleman bowed, and said—in an accent which at once established his title to the name—

"Mrs. Gordon, I presume?"

Gabrielle returned the bow.

"I fear I have disturbed you"—glancing at the book; "I beg sincerely to apologize. The fault lies with your husband, from whom I come, charged with permission to introduce myself to you; and further, with a message requesting you to bear the infliction of my company for a little while. The fact is, I rode over to see him on business—we are old acquaintances, by-the-way—but a previous engagement with his steward prevents his seeing me till after luncheon; to which he has done me the honor of inviting me, provided"—another bow—"provided that you do not object."

Gabrielle, a little puzzled, smiled and blushed, and said something about being very happy in calling forth a third bow, lower and more obsequious than the rest. Fortunately for her, she was all unconscious of the scrutiny which was going on beneath this deferential exterior.

"I think, if you'll allow me, I'll sit down. The heat is something stupendous." And, having first paused for Gabrielle to resume her own seat, he installed himself at her side. She thought him somewhat cool; but since he was undoubtedly a gentleman, and sent to her by James, she prepared, as best she could, to entertain him.

"All this time I have not the honor of knowing your name," said she.

"No, by-the-by! What unpardonable negligence on my part! That reminds me—in a certain work, entitled 'Say and Seal'—have you read it?"

"I have seen it, I believe."

I the hero of that work, albeit a model perfection, on making his first appearance, like me, to give himself a name. So his hostess, after conversing with him for of half an hour, leaves the room, and the servant, with her compliments, and I'd be glad to know who he is. You 'you doubted my veracity, Mrs. Gordon; assure you this is a fact. I heard my sister read the whole scene to my wife, one of some unlucky accident—a rent in my stained me for its reparation in the room. By-the-by, the very glove and rent!" And the unknown contemplated while Gabrielle eyed him curiously. "I wasn't told me his name after all," she "and I don't like to ask again. I must wait till James comes."

were deeply engrossed when I crossed I saw. Might I be allowed—"?" and in his hand the book which lay on the 'Friends in Council!' Mrs. Gordon, I ate you." Then, as Gabrielle stared—"superior taste I mean. It is not often sees so young a lady so much interested of this kind. In the present day, the light, or rather frothy reading, is especially among girls—young women. I logize"—another bow—"for using the men." It is meant to include all

not judge," said Gabrielle, "of any part my own. But as concerns them I am great injustice is often done, by regard-occupations in society as criterions of as. Who would bring a book that reach thought and attention into a draw-ful of people, most of whom are laughing, talking, and doing their best to put of any kind out of the question?"

mean that young ladies usually reserve books for their bedrooms or their

Well! the conclusion is charitable; for instance, at least, true." He held up in Council."

that was just as it happened. If you in the afternoon, I dare say I should be reading a novel."

"Aurora Floyd"—or one of her crew?"

—no—perhaps not. But I am very novels, in a general way; only I don't in the morning. Good novels I mean, ; those that seem like a bit out of real

'Aurora Floyd,' then, does not come

under that description? Or perhaps your partiality for real life does not extend beyond its sunny side; you abjure its horrors."

"Horrors of that sort—all crime and misery? I would rather never know that such things exist."

"But since they do exist—"

"Yes?"

"Is there not something of sickliness, of sentimentality, in closing your eyes to them?"

"I suppose there would be," said Gabrielle, "if, by opening my eyes, I could do any good. But as it is, they might corrupt me, while I should have no power to purify them."

"Corrupt you? Would that be possible?"

"Why not?" said Gabrielle, laughing.

He felt himself silenced.

"Ha!" he said presently, turning over the leaves of "Friends in Council;" "I see you follow that good custom of marking one's pet bits. At least, I suppose this is your mark?—"

"What are possessions? To an individual, the stores of his own heart and mind preëminently."

"Yes," said Gabrielle; "I did mark that. It is a very favorite passage of mine."

"Singular," he said, meditatively. "Now I could imagine a poor, or a misanthropical person, sitting down and double-scoring such sentiments as these. But you"—he waved his hand toward the house, the gardens that surrounded it, the park and woods, stretching far into the distance; "you—so rich in material possessions—no sour grapes throughout your whole domain! Yes, certainly: it is singular."

"And here, too—further on—is another mark:

"What, then, are a nation's possessions? The great words that have been said in it; the great deeds that have been done in it; the great buildings, the great works of art that have been made in it."

"How is this, Mrs. Gordon? pray explain the phenomenon. Do you indeed regard these good things of yours with indifference, as of no true value?"

("Now, if she's a fool or a humbug, she'll swear she does!")

Gabrielle pondered a moment, looking down. At any rate, he thought her face was not foolish! or humbugging either.

"No," said she, suddenly raising her eyes; "I regard them as blessings—in their way, great blessings; and I enjoy them. I think it is difficult not to enjoy them too much. But at the same time, they seem to me less in the light of

possessions than of loans; because death must take them away."

"And those other possessions, you think, death cannot take?—the stores of your own heart and mind."

"Those? Oh no. While the soul lives, they must live, forever."

"A very pleasant creed, Mrs. Gordon. May it prove a true one! And by the way, according to that, your husband will be a millionaire in the next world. What a mind he has, to be sure! He is a true genius."

"Do you think so?" cried Gabrielle, delighted.

"Ah!" thought her companion; "here, at least, lies a vulnerable point!"

"Who would not think so? Look at his 'Four Essays.' That book is a prodigy of wisdom. In profundity of thought, it is matchless; in—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Gabrielle, with a half smile—"but let me remind you that praise exaggerated is no praise."

"Mrs. Gordon, you astonish me. Exaggerated! Surely, for such an author, for such a book, no praise can be too great."

"The author and the book themselves, would tell you differently," said Gabrielle.

"And—forgive me, this is more to the point: what would you tell me?"

"Why, in the first place—if, with that assertion about 'a prodigy of wisdom,' you had coupled some such saving clause as 'the age of the writer considered,' or so forth: I should feel it to be a much higher, because a much truer compliment. And, in the second place, as respects the 'matchless profundity of thought'—I suppose I am mistaken, then, in fancying that I have heard of a certain person called Francis Bacon, or of another called John Locke, or of another called Joseph Butler, or of another called Isaac Newton, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera."

"Mrs. Gordon, you are too severe."

"I think not. It is only love of truth," said Gabrielle, laughing. "Next time you pay compliments, let me advise you to choose your terms with more care."

"Well, at least you will allow me—speaking of your husband as my friend, which does me honor—to say I regard him as the most talented man whom I know."

"That sounds more likely to be true," replied Gabrielle, with shining eyes.

"It is true. You need not be afraid; I shall exaggerate no more, in your presence! And, by-

the-way, esteeming Gordon as I do, I really thankful, if you would use your influence to persuade him to enter Parliament downright shame that talents like his should be unseen in private life. He has 'the gab;' great clearness of judgment; vantage of position, wealth, and influence; in short, it would be difficult to say what I might facilitate the winning of a name for such a man to bury himself in the Yorkshire—hidden—unnoticed—"

"He may be hidden; whether he is noticed, remains to be proved," said Gabrielle, thinking of the great book.

"He will write, you mean? But the slow work writing is! Carving his name in toil and difficulty, in a block of marble, his feet lies a trumpet, by means of which he might proclaim that name, far and wide."

"The echoes of the trumpet would resound," said Gabrielle; "the marble would remain."

"And you are contented, then—it is by your advice, that his powers are thus shown," said Mrs. Gordon!

"I should not presume to advise! Gabrielle, the light returning to her eyes, I confess I am quite contented that he pursue the path which he has marked for himself—and which, I believe, will at length lead him to a height far beyond that of which he speaks. He is young, and his talents require cultivation; he wants time, to study and to write."

"*Parlez du soleil, et vous en verrez les effets*," the stranger suddenly exclaimed: and looking up, espied her husband at the door of the lawn.

"By-the-by, that reminds me—" and he bowed—"what arrant negligence! I verily think that I have never responded to the honor which Mr. Gordon did me, in inquiring my name."

"No," said Gabrielle, quietly.

"I beg ten thousand pardons. But I am late than never. My name is Raynton Peter Raynton, at your service. Your husband and I, as he may have informed you, are friends in 'auld lang syne.'"

This latter sentence Gabrielle did not heed. The bare name of Raynton had sufficed her in confusion. The anonymous intimation of the examinatory character of the conversation she understood both! Her husband had planned this interview. Throughout it she had been, unconsciously, shown, and shown to be, "Oh! horrible! horrible! most horrible!"

"Raynton, we may as well make the most of this opportunity."

breast of it," said James, approaching, and seeing the state of things at a glance.

"I have no objection in the world," returned Raynton, with a sardonic gesture.

"Well, then, Gabrielle, to tell you the truth, this fellow here is somewhat addicted to whims; one of which, a few days ago, took the form of a desire to make your acquaintance *incog.* At first I demurred; but at last I yielded; the sequel you know. And now can you forgive me?"

"And me—the arch-offender?"

Gabrielle was compelled to assent; and to swallow her vexation as best she might.

"By George, Gordon," said the visitor, as soon as they were alone, "you are a lucky fellow! That wife of yours is a little gem; how you came upon her I can't imagine. If I were not already blest in that way, I should certainly apply for your recipe."

"You approve of her, then?" said James—actually flushing with delight.

"To make a confession, I don't know that I was ever more taken, at first sight, with any woman; always excepting my own highly-esteemed better half. Yes—so far, I do approve of her."

"And yet she is no beauty," said James, smiling.

"Not critically; but the sweetest face.—However, Gordon, I advise you to look out lest she should be spoiled. Women are made of spoiling stuff; they can't stand any thing much in the way of incense; of which I should say this wife of yours is likely to get her full share. By-the-way, I wish you could have heard her just now, calling me to account; it was the richest fun—and all so sensible too."

"What was it? Tell me," said James, with almost boyish eagerness. Whereupon Raynton laughed sardonically; and repeated the staple of the conversation which had passed between Gabrielle and himself.

"I was rather afraid, though, as I heard her talk, that she would turn out—little as she looked it—something in the strong-minded line; inclined to come it over her husband, you know, and so forth. When you joined us, I opened my eyes and watched you both, like another Argus. Certainly my fears were groundless. Sweetness and deference itself! I wish that sage precept, 'Wives, submit yourselves'—were always half as well exemplified!"

"It is early days with us yet, you know," said James, pitying the half-wistful, half-bitter tone in which these last words were spoken.

"That's true. This afternoon ten years, now, I may come over here again, and find you fighting."

"She poked and I tonged; eh?"

"Nobody knows. There's nothing dependable, my dear Gordon, under the sun. No, not even this good brute's good back; though it looks so, don't it?" said Raynton, as he mounted his horse.

"Ah, James!" said Gabrielle, when they met again; "next time you ask me to put on a white *piqué*, I shall know what it means."

"What will it mean?" said James.

"That somebody, in whose eyes you wish me to look well, is coming *incognito* to luncheon."

"And do you suppose, you conceited child, that you look well in white *piqué*?"

"I suppose that you think so," replied Gabrielle, laughing.

"Well! the fitness of things considered, it is just the dress for a pure white innocent little thing like you."

"James, James—" putting her hand before his mouth; "do you know what I pray every day?"

"That you may every day get deeper into your husband's heart, my child? Because so it is."

"That I may be kept from pride and vain-glory; and from believing what you tell me."

"Thank you, Gabrielle."

"Nonsense, James. You understand. What you tell me about myself. I find it so very, very difficult, when I am with you, to be humble."

"Raynton's sage warnings were hardly necessary!" thought James; "she's not in much danger of spoiling yet, I fancy."

But he never questioned how it might be, that, in knowing her own weakness, she was strong.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight."

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

GABRIELLE and Cissy were returning from a ride; traversing at a foot's pace one of the shady lanes that lay between Farnley and Meddiscombe. Every now and then they paused to gratify Cissy's passion for the honeysuckle with which, on either

side, the hedges were fragrant. And it was in one of these pauses—while Cissy was bending over her horse's neck, and gathering spray after spray—that Gabrielle, looking on down the lane, became aware of a slight, clerical figure, somewhat above the middle height, advancing rapidly and, to all appearance—for his eyes were fixed upon the ground—unconsciously, in their direction.

"Cissy," said Gabrielle, in a low tone; "Cissy, I do believe—"

She stopped short; and Cissy, startled, dropped the honeysuckle.

"What is it? Why, Gabrielle! there's Mr. Godfrey. I did not know he had come back."

"No more did I," she replied, in the same low voice. Immediately afterward he had raised his eyes, had recognized Gabrielle. He hesitated, half pausing for one moment; then quickened his pace; and half a dozen strides farther brought him to the horse's side.

Perhaps the straight cut of his coat, the uniform blackness of the cloth, so different from the loose suits of gray tweed wherein Charlie's lay life had delighted; perhaps it was partly to these, that the change in his appearance was owing. Anyhow, the change was there. Gabrielle could hardly realize that this grave, rather ascetic, young clergyman was the self-same Charlie who, three years back, had gone nutting and black-berrying with her in the Eversfield lanes.

He had become thin and pale, or rather yellow—yellow mingled with brown. His forehead was no longer smooth; he looked thoughtful, a little worn. The boyish air which had once characterized him, was gone; he was a man now, every inch of him—a grave, hard-working, somewhat melancholy, man. Even the fair hair and the simple blue eyes partook of the general transformation. The one seemed trimmer, smoother, more closely cut. The others, simple as ever, had lost their sunniness; they appeared to be gazing into life, as expecting and prepared, to see there more of evil than of good, more of misfortune than of happiness."

"Well, Gabrielle," he began; then, catching himself up, with a half smile, "I beg your pardon; I should say Mrs. Gordon, I suppose, now. So you are at home again? I am glad to see you looking so well.—Miss Gordon, how are you?" And he passed on to Cissy.

Then Gabrielle saw that even his manner was altered. Its peculiar buoyancy had passed away. It was like the rest of him—sober, grave, subdued.

"I am sorry to see *you* looking so ill, Charlie. I fear you overwork yourself at Meddiscombe."

"No;" his under lip trembled just a little, though his voice was steady and calm: "I have no more than I can get through with perfect ease, thank you. Besides, I am only just returned from a long outing."

"I know," said Gabrielle, smiling. "Do you suppose that I—that we could have been all this time at Farnley without inquiring about you? It was the very first thing of which I thought when we got home. We are expecting a few people to dinner this evening; don't you think—"

"Thank you," he repeated, hurriedly; "I am rather busy to-day. I'm sorry I can't turn, and walk a little way with you; but I must go on at once. I have to baptize a sick child."

"You'll 'do your endeavors' to let us see you at Farnley soon, I hope, though?" said Cissy.

"Yes, indeed," said Gabrielle. "You must dine with us the first evening that you can."

"Thank you," he repeated once more; "you are very kind. Good-by, Mrs.—Gordon."

"No—Gabrielle, please," she said, blushing. Then, lowering her voice, as she bent toward him: "Charlie, I thought we agreed that we would always be brother and sister."

"Well, good-by, Gabrielle, then—since you wish that compact to hold good."

He grasped, almost wrung, her hand; and, with a hasty farewell to Cissy, hurried away. They looked after him; he was striding along at the same pace as before; he never once turned his head.

"Poor Charlie!" exclaimed Gabrielle, some minutes later, after an abstracted silence, in which Cissy, for a wonder, had shared.

"Poor Charlie, indeed!" rejoined Cissy. "He'll turn into a melancholy madman, or a fakir, or a dancing dervish, or something equally unpleasant, before long."

"Did you see much of him in the winter, Cissy?"

"Yes, a good deal. We had several very amicable dialogues."

"What about?"

"Oh, subjects of mutual interest; and they did him good. At least, I thought so; he used to brighten. But now he's down again among the dead men."

"I must get James to ask him to dinner; and he shall take you in, Cissy."

"Thanks, dear; that's an honor with which I can dispense. I don't see why the task of dis-

sipating his fumes should always fall on me. You'd better set James to do it. You know James is omnipotent."

Some days afterward a Farnley groom brought Charlie a formal invitation, which Charlie—aware that the trial of seeing Gabrielle at the head of another man's table, at home in another man's house, was a trial that must be faced—accepted.

And he did take Cissy in to dinner.

"Do you like Brierley Lodge, Miss Gordon?"

"I like the jasmine on the porch," said Cissy.

"But not the place itself?"

"As a rule, no. As an exception, I sometimes like a little bit of it—the particular bit in which I chance to be when any thing pleasant happens; for instance, when a letter from Gabrielle is brought to me in the dining-room, I like the dining-room—till I take the letter up-stairs. But don't mention it, Mr. Godfrey. Since we must leave, we must, and there's an end of it. And pray say nothing to make Olivia suspect my feelings. She would either be wretched or look for a house elsewhere, which, devoted as she is to Annie, would never do. In her presence I bottle up my prejudices, and behave as though Brierley Lodge were a synonymous term for Paradise."

"But that must be awfully hard. Upon my word, I'm very sorry for you."

"Well, certainly, it is a little hard to live in a state of bottledom. However, when my heart is peculiarly 'o'erfraught,' and 'the grief that cannot speak' is whispering with peculiar loudness, I retire to my room, lock the door, and sing the following refrain:

"I don't like this place, I don't.
I won't like this place, I won't.
I can't bear this place, I can't.
I sha'n't ever settle in this place, I sha'n't."

That, repeated two or three times, is a wonderful relief. And when it fails I send for Spitfire, and make him run away with me. And Brierley Lodge, I pretend, is under his hoofs, being trampled to atoms. The first few yards dispose of the drawing-room; the next few the dining-room; and so till my wrath abates. Sometimes it isn't necessary to go beyond the first story; sometimes the spification extends to the attics—the chimneys even."

"I should have thought it would begin with the chimneys."

"No; I have no particular grudge against them. I've never sat in them, lamenting Farnley, and sulking. But don't look so concerned,

Mr. Godfrey. I'm not tired yet of my life. I only say all this because you listen, and because I'm a chatterbox and an egotist. Of course, though, I've left out the pleasant parts. Beings 'yearning for sympathy' always do. And, when I consider, the pleasant parts make up the better half. However, before I left Farnley, they made up the whole, or nearly the whole; and I don't approve of the change."

"Such changes are not uncommon, I fear," said poor Charlie. "The sooner that we can make up our minds to put happiness out of the question, and to plod on at our work, from day to day, without expecting it, the better for us."

"Mr. Godfrey, how dreadfully hydropathical!—misanthropical, I mean. Do you mistake the world for Pharaoh's brick-kiln? That was just the tone of voice in which one of the wretched set-a-thief-to-catch-a-thief superintendents might have said: 'Fulfil your tasks, your daily tasks, as when there was straw!'"

"Miss Gordon," said Charlie, biting his lip to repress a smile, "forgive me, but I really think you are a little too flippan't."

"Indeed? Well, so I am; I won't quarrel with your candor. Seriously, though, if I looked upon life as some people look upon it—as a great tread-mill, where there is nothing but work, work, work, all day—I should wish I had never been born! But I don't look upon it so," she added, petulantly. "Life is bright and beautiful, abounding in sunshine, and flowers, and music; and we are free to enjoy them all as long and as heartily as possible. That's my firm belief. You sha'n't shake it. You'd be far happier if you'd make it your own."

"It is my own, to a degree; but I believe something else as well."

"What, pray?"

"I believe—I see—that life abounds no less in clouds than in sunshine, in thorns than in flowers, in wailing than in music; and more."

"Because things are so distorted. I didn't say, I am no such idiot as to say, that no one is unhappy. I simply assert that no one ought to be unhappy; that we are not created for unhappiness. I feel it; I feel joy to be my element; I feel sunshine to be my native air; I feel that there is in my nature, no real sympathy with pain, or death, or misery. They are not congenial; they sit ill on me, like badly-made clothes. Then, work—as you call it: I deny that, in the tread-mill sense, work is intended. The work of birds is to sing; and of flowers to

bloom; and of stars to shine; and of bees to gather honey."

"Miss Gordon, birds, and flowers, and stars, and bees, have never fallen; they are free—much more free, at least, than we are—from the curse of the fall."

Cissy was silent. A new idea had dawned upon her mind.

"If"—pursued Charlie, seeing in her eyes a shade of unwonted seriousness—"if we, who have fallen, find that the means by which to rise, to regain our lost estate, is to struggle boldly and patiently toward it, through pain, sorrow, death: should we not train ourselves to look calmly on these things, to accept them as inevitable—perhaps even to bless them, as our teachers, our deliverers, our truest friends?"

Still Cissy was silent; still her countenance retained that passive cast. And Charlie, regarding her—young, bright, just entered on her course of life's long discipline, and finding it, as, at first, most of us find it, so inexplicable, so hard—Charlie felt in his heart something of tenderness, of pity, of a desire to shield her from those troubles which yet, in theory, he acknowledged to be so beneficial.

Suddenly, catching his eye, she colored; and said with a light laugh:

"Well, Mr. Godfrey! I think we had better choose another subject. If we dive deeper into this, we shall soon be in a maze of Thomas à Kempisisms, fathers, schools, and I don't know what: and such considerations are not exactly the things for a dinner-party. We'll go to something else."

Whether they went to something else, or no, the conversation never flagged. It is to be hoped that the lady on Charlie's left hand, and the gentleman on Cissy's right hand, felt themselves content with their own respective partners. For not one word did that lady get from Charlie, or that gentleman from Cissy, throughout dinner. And at night, Charlie returned to Meddiscombe in better spirits than, when he quitted it, he would have believed possible; while Cissy realized, more forcibly than ever before, the exceeding bad taste which Gabrielle had shown, in marrying James when she might have married Mr. Godfrey!

All this time, James, in the intervals of his other occupations, was working hard at his great book; that "Philosophical Review," of which he had told Gabrielle; and which, a month or two before their return to England, he had begun. Gabrielle was deeply interested in watching its

progress; it was, in fact, scarcely less in her thoughts than in his own. Often, after her sisters-in-law were gone, she would steal into his study, and sit quietly down, out of sight, behind his chair, and here would spend hours: sometimes reading,—more frequently, working and thinking; listening to the sound of his pen, and weaving dreams of its future glory. When he had finished, she would lean over his shoulder, commenting on what he had done; and the thoughtfulness, the depth, of her comments, quite took James by surprise. Once or twice, even, they gave him a hint.

She never accused him, as The Featherstone might have done, of being too abstruse, or too "bookish" for her. What she could not at first understand, she asked him to explain, listening with childlike confidence, as he did so. Sometimes, when he flagged, she recalled him to himself; in moments of discouragement, spurred him on; opened his manuscript, placed his chair, mended his pens, removed every excuse for idleness; and, as it were, forced him to the work. And she never enticed him from it, to drive or to walk with her; she never complained of loneliness, never hindered him in any way. In all things she was, as she had prayed to be, a true helpmeet: forgetting herself.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Your sweet faces make good fellows fools."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"It strikes me—" observed Raynton, looking at James with a sardonic smile; "it strikes me, Gordon, that I was slightly mistaken, when I said that you were not the sort to turn into a domestic man. A more perfect model of domesticity than your present life, could scarcely be imagined."

Raynton had been spending a few days at Farnley, and was leaving it in a somewhat envious, an exceedingly bitter, and a generally exasperated state of mind. He felt that, before he started, he must relieve himself by a hit at James.

"And, pray, in what respect is my life more domestic than yours?" said James, a little nettled.

"Come! you needn't fire up, my dear fellow. A domestic life is a very comfortable thing. I don't suppose a tame cat in the kingdom would exchange its cushion, for 'all the glories of the chase.'"

"Probably not," said James, coldly. "What do you deduce from that?"

"I've just told you, man—a domestic life is a very comfortable thing! And most magnanimous I feel myself, for owning it, and for leaving you—as I do—my blessing, in returning to my harder lot."

"Your harder lot!" repeated James; "now, I should say, that, all things considered, you are far more of the genuine domestic character than I am. You have a set of children to see after, in addition to your wife."

"Nothing whatever to the point," said Raynton, composedly; "I might have fifty wives, and a hundred children, and yet remain as undomestic as though I had none! A man is not a domestic man, because he happens to possess a domestic circle. It is when his personal comfort and happiness depend upon that circle: when he feels all out of sorts, for instance, if his wife leave home for a week; can't be contented with his own ideas, till he has run to communicate them to her—perhaps ask her advice; delights in her little coddling ways, such as women have the knack of; in fact, basks in them, as the tame cat basks before the fire—it is only then that he has a right to be called a domestic man."

"A pleasing picture!" said James, ironically.

"Yes; I agree with you, my dear fellow. A thoroughly pleasing picture. One that, if generally prevalent, would make this earth a second Eden. However, some of us, you see, are cursed with inconveniently extensive desires—desires that cannot rest satisfied with what is pleasing alone; so these sweet pictures are not generally prevalent. And this earth is not a second Eden. And its cats occasionally go wild."

"And its grapes occasionally sour," James muttered, between his teeth. Raynton heard, but pretended not to hear, maintaining his sardonic equanimity. His horse was waiting at the door, and he hastened to mount.

"Never mind, Gordon," said he, pausing ere he applied the spurs: "'Ah, who can tell how hard it is to climb—?' Etcetera. And not worth the pains, after all, if report say true. You're better off on your cushion. Accept my benedictus."

He was gone before James could reply.

James, albeit intensely disgusted, remembered that "lookers-on see most of the game." He stood for some time in the door-way, lost in silent meditation; and reëntered the house, determined to watch himself, and to search out the truth.

He sat down to his writing. An hour elapsed

—two hours; he was still alone: he began to long for Gabrielle, to wonder why she had not, as usual, come to sit behind his chair. Another half-hour; the work flagged; he could not collect his thoughts. It was raining: if she were out, she would, ten to one, catch cold, and suppose that cough returned—! He found himself looking out of the window; with real anxiety, watching the torrents. Bah! this was being a domestic man, indeed!

He resumed his writing with fresh vigor; but ere long, it flagged again. He wanted to consult Gabrielle about the last few pages—as to whether they should be retained, or struck out. Still rain—rain—rain. He started up; he must really go and—The door opened; in she came: dripping, breathless, laughing merrily—she had run all the way from the lodge! James's anxiety revived. Was she very tired? She must change her dress at once: and then rest. But when she had left the room, he felt conscious of some slight humiliation. What could be more domestic than this?

A few minutes more, and she was back in the study—all fresh, and bright, and sweet. He wished that he could have welcomed her without such foolish pleasure—could have asked her opinion on those pages, without such absurd eagerness:—wished, moreover, that he had not felt himself compelled to second her criticisms; in deference to them, striking out one-half of what he had written, and materially altering the rest.

Then, again, when, after dinner, he joined her in the drawing-room, and she sprang to meet him, linking her arm in his, and exclaiming how pleasant it was to have him quite alone: then again, he wished that his heart had responded less warmly to that exclamation; that he had not, in his turn, felt so happy to have her alone.

Yes; Raynton was right, he feared. And every day, throughout the ensuing week, as he maintained his strict self-watch, served to confirm this fear. He saw every day more plainly, that his life—so far from being the grand, self-sufficient life which he had set up as his ideal—was now so intertwined with Gabrielle's, that the one was almost entirely dependent on the other for all that made its earthly possession valuable. Even his book, his chief business, owed much of its progress to her; to her incitements, her zealous and contagious interest. He was not sure whether a wife of this kind were not, in reality, more of a drawback than a wife of the Dora Copperfield kind!

He must shake himself free. He must not—

even to Gabrielle—be a slave. He remembered the year of indulgence to which he had pledged himself. That year was already elapsed; more than elapsed. The following Friday would be the anniversary of his wedding-day. The year had dated from the day of his engagement.

But he would overshoot the mark a little further yet: just till that Friday, that anniversary, was gone by. In the interim—for the last time—he would give himself full swing; would be as affectionate, as “domestic,” as he chose,

The day dawned and set. The next morning: “Gabrielle,” said he; “I must turn over a new leaf. I have wasted no end of time lately.”

“Have you, James? I should not have thought it. Your book is getting on famously.”

“I fancy”—with an effort—“that my book would get on better, if you did not sit in my study while I write.”

She looked up: half-pained, half-wondering.

“Oh, James! Do you think so really?”

Her eyes and her tone combined, were almost too much for him; but he hardened his heart.

“I do indeed. I should have less difficulty in concentrating my thoughts. You sit very still; but it is impossible to forget that I am not alone; and— In fact, Gabrielle, I can’t forbid you the room, but I am convinced that it would be better, both for me and for the work, if you stayed away.”

“Then I will stay away,” said Gabrielle, after an inward struggle. She smiled as she spoke; but her lip quivered, just a little: and there was something like a tear in her eye.

“Then that’s agreed,” said James. “In writing-hours, henceforth, I am alone.”

“Very well,” she answered, gently; and he rose to go. But catching, as he reached the door, a little irrepressible sigh, he paused—hesitated: finally, by a sudden impulse, turned: and took her into his arms.

“My darling—” he said: and kissed away the tear that still trembled on her eyelashes; “you must not vex yourself about me, or I shall curse the day when I was selfish enough to marry you.”

Before she could answer, he had quitted the room: leaving his words to be interpreted as best they might.

CHAPTER XLIX.

“Henceforth
The course of life that seemed so flowery to me
With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,
And ending in a ruin.”

ALFRED TENNYSON.

“WELL, my boy!” said Mr. Morris, laying aside his pen; although he had just filled it, preparatory to concluding the last sentence of Section XI. in the “Introduction to a Treatise on the Ten Missing Tribes of Israel, with Certain Interesting Conjectures touching their Wanderings, their Settlements, and their Posterity”—“well, my boy! here you are, at last. Come and sit down.”

As he spoke, he tilted a chair; dislodging two gigantic slippers and a shoehorn.

“Thanks,” said Charlie, seating himself in their place, and throwing off his hat—pushing back, with something of weariness, a heavy wave of fair hair. Then, during several minutes, he sat silent, deep in thought.

“Tired?” said Mr. Morris, presently. “Tired?”

“Not in the least, thank you,” replied the young man; and hesitated. And while he hesitates, we will take a glance around the room.

It is a room in Meddiscombe Rectory; where Charlie, for nearly two years, has been settled—and not settled alone; Mr. Morris, yielding to his earnest entreaties, has consented to share his home. Here, in this study, are collected all those treasured possessions, which we have seen before in that other study, at the creeper-covered cottage. Here are the leather arm-chairs, the huge black inkstand, the picture of the Crucifixion, the piles of manuscript, and the bitten pens. Here, too, as ever, are roses—fresh and sweet. And the windows, like those other windows, look westward. Mr. Morris can still sit, as he has been wont, and watch the sunset; dreaming his vague yet happy dreams, concerning the sunset of life.

Over his countenance has stolen, of late, an expression of deep repose. His dim eyes have less of sadness in them; more of peace. Occasionally a smile—chastened, but contented—hovers about his lips. He has the air of one who, after long strife, has been carried in the evening stillness from the battle-field, and lain upon a bank, to rest; around whom birds chant vespers—zephyrs breathe fragrance—dying rays fall, with tempered radiance, athwart his face.

Quietness has come to him; and, as his eyes close, he thinks on his past conflict, and thanks God.

Charlie too is somewhat altered. He too hears about him the marks of by-gone strife. But, so far from being spent, he seems refreshed; girded anew. Still bright, still simple, still hopeful, are his blue eyes; his forehead, one deep furrow overlooked, retains much of the smoothness of early youth. The lines of his mouth are set more sternly than of yore; but they are still ready, at a moment's notice, to relax in an almost boyish laugh.

"I have been to Farnley about that subscription," said he, his hesitation past; "Gordon will give five pounds, and Gabrielle three—"

"Well?" returned Mr. Morris; and he pushed the manuscript aside. The young man started from his chair, and began to pace the room.

"I wish—" he burst out—"I wish I felt sure that Gabrielle was happy!"

"Any reason to fear that she is not?" asked Mr. Morris, in his sing-song voice.

"Well—I don't know; I have no right—and yet—"

He paused in his walk, sitting down impetuously as he had risen:

"Mr. Morris, I can't for the life of me, help thinking of these two lines:

"I hate him for the vow he spoke,
I hate him for the vow he broke."

Whenever I see her, those lines ring in my head."

"Too strong, Godfrey, my boy," said Mr. Morris.

"Very likely. I'm not a saint, you know, yet; though they do stick reverend before my name. He neglects her; I'm positive he neglects her; and 'tis all that I can do to stand it. Only for my office, I verily believe, I should have knocked him down, long ago."

"Ah—" one of Mr. Morris's groaning sighs. "Yes. Hard, inexpressibly, to look on and be patient!"

"When first she married," continued Charlie, with vehemence, "she was happiness itself. One glance at her was enough to make a fellow feel sunshine all over. It nearly reconciled me, upon my word, to— But now—I do wish you could have been with me, this afternoon. Then you'd know."

"Do know. Often observed it," said Mr. Morris, sadly.

"Have you? No wonder. Every one must

observe it; every one who knew her before. That settled look of—well, not sorrow, exactly—wistfulness, pensiveness; which has come over her face; and that manner—all the old eagerness gone; yet so sweet still—so far more taking than any other manner I ever see;" and Charlie went off into abstraction.

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Morris, in his dreamy tone, "she had the desire of her heart."

"Ay; so had he, the vil—" he checked himself. "And finely he's showing his gratitude! However, I'll speak of him no more; I can't think of him, with common patience. To go back to her: what do you imagine I found her doing, just now? Sitting all alone at a table, with both her hands up to her head, and, before her, a great book; a Latin grammar, I discovered, afterward."

"Learning Latin to kill time?"

"No, no; you'll hear directly. I had no sooner asked her how she did, than she looked up at me, just in her old way, and asked my help—those irregular verbs were so tiresome! I set her right, of course; and then I asked what on earth she was about—victimizing herself with that dry old Latin? did she like it? And she said, oh, no, she hated it; that confession came out quite involuntarily, by-the-way—but, if she knew Latin, she might some time be able to make herself useful to James. And there was a slate full of construing—which she had been plodding over, till her head ached—I made her own that—and, in one place, a great blur, a whole sentence gone; washed away—you may guess how. And that sweet face of hers, so pale and tired. Mr. Morris, if that scene were not enough to touch the heart of any fellow who wasn't a stoic, or a block of marble; I should like to know what is?"

"Very touching. Very touching. Poor child! Poor child!" said Mr. Morris, huskily.

"Well, then I asked—a mistake, perhaps; but it escaped me—why she didn't get her husband to teach her, instead of working herself to death, all alone. And she answered, in the patient tone that nearly drives me mad; oh, James knew nothing about it; besides he was too busy.—Too busy, indeed—I told her I hoped she would make what use she liked of me; let me correct her exercises, and so forth, whenever she felt inclined. She thanked me ten times more than the affair was worth, and said that she should go on with fresh courage, now that she had some one to whom she might turn, in an emergency. Quite naturally this speech came out—without suspi-

cion of any inference, bad or good. But—don't you agree with me, Mr. Morris?—there must somewhere be something very wrong, if she cannot turn to her husband."

"Never take evil for granted," said Mr. Morris; "may be motives underneath. Wishes to take him by surprise, perhaps. Don't know."

"No; and I, for one, don't believe," said Charlie, hotly: "nothing can be plainer. She sees that he's bored by her, and she shrinks into herself. That's what it is; neither more nor less. It makes my blood boil."

"Well!" said Mr. Morris: "there's one comfort. She has a protector who loves her better than you can. He sets her lessons. He'll look after her. It will all come right; in the end."

"How I envy your heights!" said Charlie, sighing; "I would give worlds, always to see things as you do."

"My boy—" and Mr. Morris laid his hand on the young man's shoulder; "you must have patience. Step by step, you know; line upon line; a gradual progress from form to form. You have learned much, already; especially in the last few years. Your disappointment about poor little Mrs. Gordon—that got you on immensely."

"Do you think so?" said Charlie, humbly: "I am glad. Certainly, in my parish, it has helped me: experienced me in various phases of trial and temptation, quickened my powers of sympathy—and so forth. Yes; I would not, for the world, have missed one pang of all that I went through. It was more of a blessing, than of a trial. I can look back on it with thankfulness, now—now that it is over."

"Quite over? No remains?" said Mr. Morris; and a father's tenderness beamed from his dim eyes.

"No remains, thank God," returned Charlie, emphatically; "I can meet her with perfect calmness. I love her as much as ever, certainly; but in a different way. I believe that, even if she were free again, it would not occur to me to wish to marry her."

"Shake hands," exclaimed Mr. Morris, seizing Charlie's left hand, as he spoke; "shake hands. Congratulate you. A victory. Congratulate you from my heart."

Charlie smiled his old sunshiny smile, with a touch of good-natured amusement; then rose from his chair.

"Well! I suppose it is almost dinner-time," said he; but Mr. Morris did not hear. He had relapsed into a dream, his eyes turned westward; where, over the sky and the calm landscape, was

stealing the golden haze which so often precedes an autumnal sunset.

"Now—" he murmured—"whenever the bell may ring, I am ready. He is happy again; what have I left—on earth—to desire?"

"Mr. Morris, don't talk so! I couldn't spare you; you don't know what you are to me. Why, but for you, I might now be as miserable as at first. I owe all to you, and your—"

"Ah!" said Mr. Morris; "yes. Wonderful how all has worked together for good! Only those who have suffered, can comfort. I have suffered; and I have comforted—her boy!"

As he spoke, a smile—to Charlie's eye, a smile full of heaven—broke forth upon his face. It was a ray from the light that comes at eventide.

The sunset was over. A rich, gorgeous, truly autumnal sunset it had been; and still, in the western sky, lingered remnants of its glory; streaks of crimson, of purple, of gold—blending near the horizon into half-defined hues of green, yellow, and gray. Gabrielle sat alone upon the terrace, reading an old book—"Evelina"—which she had hunted out of the library. Chilly dews were falling; and she was none too warmly clad; but nobody came to remind her of either fact. No friendly voice, from the many windows which overlooked the terrace, warned her that her seat was becoming dangerous. So far as her health went, it was fortunate that she happened to be at the end, instead of at the beginning, of the book.

It was finished. She closed it, laid it down; and, leaning back in her seat, looked westward, toward those scenes of fading splendor, with a wistful sadness very touching in one so young.

"Yes—" she was thinking—with reference to the old book, and its felicitous termination; "yes; it is very pleasant; but it is not real. The common mistake of novels . . . that when two people who love each other, marry, their troubles end. That is not true; it is not life."

And Gabrielle sighed.

The last faint glory-streaks were dying; the veil of twilight was gradually enshrouding the earth. But still she sat, her listless attitude unchanged, looking westward; and presently, half-unconsciously, she began to quote the three concluding lines of Thekla's song:

"Du Heilige, rufe dein Kind zurück,
Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück:
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet."*

* "Thou Holy One, call thy child back;
I have tasted the highest Good:
I have lived and loved."

"Yes, I have tasted the highest earthly good. I have known the highest earthly love. If I lived a century longer, earth could give me nothing more, nothing fuller or sweeter. Is it very wrong, I wonder—very idle—to wish to die? to fly from a place where joy, for me, is exhausted: where I am wanted no longer, no longer necessary to any one, even the dearest? I suppose it is; and yet, how hard not! Wishes are so ungovernable."

She rose, and, wandering restlessly to the balustrade, stood leaning over it; her eyes strained toward the sky, where, one by one, the first faint stars had begun to glimmer.

"Papa," she said, half aloud; "are you there? Do you see me? Oh, surely, if he did, he would ask the angels to fetch me. He would have pity on my loneliness. Would you not, my own father?"

She paused; but none answered. Only the stars still came glimmering out, one by one.

"I suppose I ought to go in," she thought at last with another heavy sigh; "it is growing chilly." Then she turned, and entered the house. The hall was very silent, very lonely. The statues seemed to scan her, as she passed, with their cold and passionless eyes. She went into the drawing-room; equally silent, equally lonely, was all there. The lamp was lighted; the curtains were drawn; external luxury abounded—but nothing more. Gabrielle threw aside her hat, drew a chair toward the table where her work-box stood, and took out a piece of embroidery.

The clock struck half-past eight.

"Oh dear!" and again she sighed. "How long these desolate evenings are! If I had only a little child—" the sadness deepened in her eyes—"a dear sweet little child to go and see, and tuck up in its bed, and afterward come down to think about and to work for; how different they would be! My whole life would be different. I should feel that I was wanted, then; and perhaps—" her eyes filled—"perhaps James would be different too. He would love it and take a pleasure in it, and it would interest him, as I"—another heavy sigh—"have not the power to interest him. Then we should have to consult how to manage it, and so on, and that would surely draw us nearer to one another."

"Oh, how I could love a little child!—my own child. What care I would take of him! How I should delight in teaching him to speak and to walk, watching him grow dearer, more sensible, every day! He would be such a darling—let me see, golden—brown hair, perhaps, like

Cissy's, and large dark eyes, like his father's, and rosy cheeks with dimples, and a smiling little mouth, so sweet to kiss. But there is no use in thinking of him; he would have come before if he were coming at all. And I ought not to grumble; and yet—Marian has three, and so has The Postlethwaite; and they don't need them as I do; their husbands—but—" she started from the listless attitude into which she had once more fallen; "But what am I thinking of to complain like this? That one year especially; that first bright year, in itself, it was a lifetime of happiness. Yes—few can say as I can:

'Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück.'"

The door opened; Wilcox entered with a salver.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. I thought master was here."

"Is that note for your master? Give it to me. I will take it myself."

Up sprang Gabrielle, all listlessness gone. She took the note, and crossing the hall, opened gently, somewhat timidly, the door of James's study. He was sitting at his table, surrounded by huge volumes, a manuscript open before him. But he was not writing, although a pen lay between his fingers. His brows were contracted; he looked deep in thought—pale, and worn, and harassed.

"James, this is for you."

With the preoccupied manner of one roused from a dream, he held out his hand, opened the note, and ran his eye over the contents. Then, tossing it aside:

"All right," said he; "no answer. Merely from Reynolds to account for his not keeping that appointment."

He dipped his pen in the ink and bent over the manuscript.

"No answer, I said, Gabrielle." She stole nearer to his chair.

"Aren't you tired, James? You have been writing such a long, long time."

"Yes, I am tired to death; don't interrupt me. I shall have finished directly, and then I shall run down to the vicarage. I want to see Edgecumbe."

"To the vicarage at this hour, James?"

"Yes, I shall be sure to find him in:"—writing.

"But it would do you much more good to come to the drawing-room, and I would sing to you."

"Thanks, Gabrielle; those are luxuries in

which I can't indulge—to-night, at any rate. Besides, I want a breath of fresh air."

"Then why not take a turn on the terrace, and let me go with you? I never see any thing of you now."

"We can't be always tacked to each other's apron-strings. No; I must go to the vicarage; and meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile I am hindering you," said Gabrielle, a little bitterly. He neither contradicted her nor raised his eyes. She turned and quitted the room.

"Don't sit up for me," he called after her, as the door closed. Then, bending lower over his writing:

"It would never do," he told himself, "to revive that old habit of flying to her whenever I am in need of refreshment. If she enthralled me less I might be with her more, but as it is—" on tore his pen.

Gabrielle had returned to the silent drawing-room; had once more shut herself in, with the comfortable chairs and sofas, the pretty tables and ornaments, the valuable books and pictures. But to her, nothing at this moment had any value or prettiness or comfort about it. So far as her feelings went, she might have been in a wilderness.

The piano was open. She sat down and began to sing one of her favorites, a little French "Romance"—"Le Fil de la Vierge." The accompaniment, although plaintive, soothed her; the words—the last verse especially—she repeated again and again.

And long after the lights in James's study were extinguished, and the manuscript was laid by, her voice—sweet and thrilling as ever—might still be heard, singing on and on and on, in that lonely drawing-room:

"Adieu, pauvre fil blanc! je t'aime; vole encore;
Mals ne va pas,
T'arrêter aux bulsons dont l'épine dévore
Et tend les bras:
Ne te repose pas, quand du haut des tourelles,
Le jour a fui;
Vole au haut, près de Dieu: les seuls amours fidèles
Sont avec Lui."

And as the last three chords, following like an echo, died into silence, some voice deep in Gabrielle's heart repeated:

"Avec Lui."

CHAPTER L.

"His spirit wholly turned
To stern ambition's dream, to that fierce str
Which leads to life's high places, and recko
What lovely flowers might periah in his pat

LITITIA ELIZABETH LI

Now and then James, obeying the voice of his genius, suspended his great devote himself for a season to some one of minor importance; some pamphlet, review. These—carelessly sending their chance in the wide world, and with fresh vigor to his history—he sight of; almost forgot. It was, however, these, and to these alone—the recreation pen—that certain paragraphs which, at time, appeared in a critical journal of his were owing.

"Four years have now elapsed—" paragraphs ran—"since the publication 'Four Essays:' a work whose rare originality and power of expression, stamped it, standing a few crudities and extravagancies, the production of a superior mind. This the title-page of the second edition—where the author's name—only confirmed. James Gordon had, in the previous year, distinguished as the successful competitor for the highest undergraduate honors of the University of Cambridge. We may doubtless to this circumstance much of the interest which his work was honored. But that was shared by some for whom the word 'Wrangler' possess no supernatural charm whose approbation was the best encouragement that the author of the 'Four Essays,' or other author, could receive.

"The career, thus honorably begun, to fulfil its promise. Mr. Gordon continued to write, and to write well. We are happy to still higher encomium: he continued better. He has taken pains to sustain and extend, the interest to which his vigorous pen gave rise; and the blemishes which were detected and pointed out to him, are, in his pages, disappearing: gradually, but in short, Mr. Gordon seems to be devoting heart and soul, to the improvement of his remarkable talents; and since he is a young man, and has ample time before him, small hesitation in predicting that he will ultimately tower as an intellectual giant.

"More than one of our literary friends have been gathered, in the past year, to

and of their survivors, not a few have attained the Biblical limit of human life. But among their children are some worthy to fill the places which have been, which must be, vacated; and of these, James Fortescue Gordon ranks, to our eye, supreme. We know no one better calculated to emulate the celebrity of the great men who have recently been removed from our midst. We know of no name so likely to be inscribed among those that, while others perish, remain immortal-y glorious."

The journal in which these prophetic eulogiums appeared, was one not by any means distinguished for habitual lavishness of praise. Considerable curiosity about James and his writings, was awakened in the public mind; the paragraphs were repeatedly copied, and circulated far and wide. His name was in every mouth; thus, already, had arisen the auroral rays of his day of fame.

And was he happy? Surely he should have been happy. For the applause of the multitude he cared little: but the approval of the wise few—for which he cared much—was his also. During this autumn, Geoffrey Savill spent a few days at Farnley; read as much as was completed of the "Philosophical Review," and foretold for it great things. Every external circumstance seemed to repeat the adjuration by which, a few years back, the young author had been encouraged: "Go on and prosper." Yes—surely he should have been happy!

At dead of night, he sat alone; and in a chronicle—half of facts, half of feelings—to which, in preference to any living *confidant*, he had occasional recourse; inscribed his private impressions:

"I am succeeding; the world is smiling on me; my book goes on apace; and, outwardly, all is well. Outwardly, I say; for inwardly—in my own mind—all is ill. I cannot—the confession is humiliating, but true—I *cannot* be my own master. I cannot rule, as I once determined to rule, in the empire of my soul; calmly, absolutely: Reason, hand in hand with the will, my prime minister; the affections, all the subordinate faculties, their obedient handmaids; each in its own place uniting with each, to form one harmonious whole—a grand, a perfect man.

"Such was my dream; but the reality—how far otherwise! Reason has not, indeed, failed me; but my will is too weak to act in unison with its dictates. Every thing is out of order; every thing is striving for a position which does not belong to it. What should be uppermost,

sinks; what should be subordinate, rises, and takes the rule.

"The struggle to remedy this confusion is incessant, wears me almost to death. I find myself continually compelled to act against the bent of my inclinations. Thus, instead of advancing, I stand still and fight: and, to make this worse, I gain nothing by it; the battle, if not against me, is drawn.

"It was an evil hour when I first allowed my interests to concentrate in a woman. The affections, that weaker part, have ever since been creeping higher in my soul; entangling more inextricably in their Gordian knots, that peace which I had resolved should lie beyond the reach of external influences. Yet did I not also resolve, that it is better to be great than to be happy? Why, then, should the diminution—even the loss—of my happiness so affect me? Because greatness implies self-sufficiency: and if any faculty within me depend—as my happiness does depend—on something beyond my own resources, for satisfaction; then I am not great, but small; not strong, but impotent.

"In the letter, in the outward man, no one could show himself less of a Geraint than I! Sometimes whole days elapse without my crossing her path, from morning to night. The charge of weakness is certainly the last that a superficial observer would impute to me. But so long as, deep within me, I feel this constant craving for her presence; so long as to abstain from seeking her—for repose when I am tired—for sympathy in my cares and in my pursuits—for counsel in perplexity—for comfort, peace, joy at all times: so long as to abstain from this, is to do violence to my nature: so long—however I may appear to the world at large, I must to myself appear degraded:—a slave to her, and to my affections.

"And I myself—not only 'sometimes,' but oftentimes—'despise myself; nor know I whether I be very base, or very manful; whether very wise, or very foolish.' Only this I know: that I belong, not to myself, but to her; and that I cannot—loathe my feebleness as I may, I *cannot*—break the chains. Although in deed, as I have said, I shatter them every day, in inclination they every day bind me faster.

"Oh, it is not just that I, who am formed with aspirations so grand, so elevated, should at the same time be cursed with tendencies so mean, so low. He Who made me a man; Who gave me to feel what manhood is; why does He oblige me to bow that manhood to a woman? But be it so. Granted that my nature, through

no fault of mine, is an unworthy nature : all the more glory in subduing it! I will rise above my nature. I will trample it down."

"Not even God"—he added, in his heart—"shall bind me against my will."

No wonder, with thoughts like these, that James became moody, morose ; sometimes unduly excited, sometimes sorely depressed! And the only influences which, now and then—even in these days—could touch or soften him, were Gabrielle's continued sweetness and gentleness, amid every provocation. In her own room alone, no human eye upon her, many a burst of passionate weeping, many an hour of agonized prayer, bore witness that the calmness of her demeanor was not the calmness of insensibility. But in his presence, she had always a smile wherewith to welcome him, always "a soft answer" wherewith to recompense the irritable words which, not unfrequently, were his only words to her, throughout the day. She never accused him of neglect ; she never forced her society upon him ; on the rare, the increasingly rare, occasions when he did unbend, she never avenged herself by repulsing him in her turn.

"Meek souls there are, who little dream
Their daily strife an angel's theme!"

Who can tell how often, at this time, that category included Gabrielle? Hers was indeed "daily strife;" only sustained by a constant remembrance of the vows by which she had pledged herself, "for better, for worse," to cleave to this her fallen ideal. For he was fallen, even in her eyes. Her experience as regarded him had gradually undermined her faith in the existence of any true ideal, short of the skies. As long as possible she shut her eyes to the frailty in which she had once believed him to have no share ; but stern reality, the witness of every day, compelled her at length to open them.

And then she saw that this hero of hers was no hero. She saw that he was egotistical ; she saw that he was vain ; she saw that whatever, in theory, he might be, in practice he was almost an atheist. And in addition, she believed that, as respected herself, he was fickle, heartless, cold. It was a bitter awakening ; and none could say how disastrous might have been its effects, had she not, throughout these years of trial, possessed two firm stays, by which to hold and steady herself when all around seemed failing.

The one was her trust in God. The other was her love for her husband ; which never varied, even when, to all appearance, he was doing his best to uproot it.

Yes, she loved him still ; she still loved him ; no longer, indeed, as an idol, an idolatrous worship—but yet as the dearest, closest the whole world, to her ; one to whom God self had united her by an indissoluble bond, whose errors she must be pitiful, trying them—to whose service she must devote as a part of her religion.

One evening—one Sunday evening—course of this autumn, James, entering found her bending over a book, spread on the table. Her head was supported by little thin hands ; and her tears were falling.

"What in the world is the matter, Gabrielle said he, gruffly. "You'll spoil that book don't take care."

Then, as she neither moved nor raised her eyes, he took it from beneath them ; and laid away the tears with which it was wet.

He was about to put it down again, when a pencil-mark attracted his attention ; a pencil, saw, lay near her on the table. He paused, looking behind her chair, and ran his eye over the lines that her tears had watered :

"What knowest thou, O wife! whether canst save thy husband?"

"He strays—how far, to thee alone,
My Saviour, and my God, is known!
Yet think upon Thy Word which says
The wife may win him from his ways,
May haply mend the broken tie
That linked us for Eternity.

"In mercy, Lord, his soul defend,
And be my Counsellor and Friend,
For unto Thee, and only Thee,
I tell my tale of misery:
No eye but Thine has seen my tears,
No bosom shared my doubts and fears.

"Thou, too, art Witness, when I said
'Until death part us, we will wed'—
'Twas written on my fervent heart,
That we were not in death to part;
But that we asked a blessing then,
Which we might ask in heaven again.

"In heaven? If I alone could be
In heaven, would it be heaven to me?
Save, save me from the thought, O Lord,
I will not go beyond Thy Word;
I'll labor for his soul and mine,
And all beside to Thee resign."

The lines marked, were the first three last verse:

"In heaven? If I alone could be
In heaven, would it be heaven to me?
Save, save me from the thought, O Lord.

James, as he read them, as his glance upon the faint, trembling pencil-marks, upon the tear-stains, was conscious of a choking sea

his throat—felt his own eyes grow dim. He closed the book, replaced it on the table, and, raising his voice with some effort, repeated, as gruffly, his former question :

"What is the matter, Gabrielle?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of, thank you," said Gabrielle.

She rose, her face carefully averted; and, taking the book, stole with the weary footstep, as habitual to her, out of the room.

James did not follow; somehow, he felt as though he had no longer any right to share or to soothe her troubles. But he snatched up the pencil which she had left on the table, and used it passionately. Then, returning to his study, sat long alone, in the darkness, thinking and thinking.

CHAPTER LI.

"I might have saved her;

Cordella, Cordella, stay a little. Ha!

What is't thou sayest? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

On the following day, Raynton came to spend a week at Farnley. He had lately lost his wife; and had appeared to feel the bereavement more keenly than might have been expected, judging from his behavior during her lifetime. Gabrielle, always on the watch to soothe and sympathize, was considerably touched by the change that had taken place in him. The sardonic manner had softened down into a confirmed despondency; the satirical smile came seldom, if ever; he looked ill, broken, and oppressed. No other guests were, at this time, in the house; and when he was not with James, he fell on her hands to entertain. In her gentle, inobtrusive way, she did her best to insinuate balm—or what she regarded as balm—into his wounds. She had not liked him before; but now, his evident wretchedness drew her toward him. This he saw, and, insensibly grateful, felt equally drawn toward her.

On the day of his departure, he and James were sitting in the study, when, suddenly, after a long, meditative silence, he said:

"Gordon, forgive me—I don't want to meddle, but that poor little wife of yours is moping, and it goes to my heart. She gives me the idea of being left too much alone."

"Indeed?" said James.

"Come, don't be high and mighty," went on Raynton, in his cool way; "I mean no offence. But when a fellow has a good deal to absorb him

in literary ways, he's apt to forget that the people with whom he lives are not absorbed likewise; in fact, to let his books swallow him up. And it strikes me—no offence, Gordon—that that's the case with you."

"Unless I devote myself to my work, I shall never get on," said James, hotly.

"Well, but there's no reason in the world, why you shouldn't devote yourself to your work and your wife too. I'm sure she's as full as full can be, of interest, in all that concerns it—or you; her head is not like most women's heads, stuffed with nonsense. Why shouldn't you let her go along with you, now, instead of throwing cold water—"

"Upon my word, Raynton, this is uncommonly strong," said James; on the verge of taking mortal offence.

"Well! and you want something strong," returned Raynton, with more of heat than might have been supposed to exist in his phlegmatic nature; "I've not spoken half—no, nor a hundredth part—so strongly as I feel. I tell you, at the risk of your hating me forever, and for your own sake, no less than for hers: that, if you don't look out, your wife will shortly be where mine is: and then how will it be with you?"

James started passionately from his chair, and confronted Raynton.

"What do you mean?" said he.

"I mean what I say, my dear fellow. Your neglect is breaking her heart. And when I see that, and think what she is—what I, with one like her, might have become—might have spared—" He stopped; for his voice was choked.

As for James, he could find no voice at all. He stood still, confronting Raynton. That sentence—"Your wife will shortly be where mine is"—rang in his ears. He saw Gabrielle, his sweet, gentle, patient little Gabrielle, lying cold and rigid, in her white shroud; and with this sight, this idea, words—every thing—failed him.

"I dare say," continued Raynton, after a minute's pause, "that you think me, of all men, least fitted to lecture you upon your duties in a conjugal line. But my own failures have made me sensitive to the failures of others; and, if you could know"—again his voice choked—"how terrible remorse is: even where the subject of it was herself in some degree unworthy:—if you could feel, one moment, this maddening craving for repentance, coupled with the knowledge that repentance, on this side the grave, there is none—can be none: then, perhaps—"

"Go on," said James, huskily.

"Then, perhaps, you might be able to picture, as I do, what that remorse, that craving, that knowledge, would be—knowing also that you only were to blame; that she only—your wife—had been the injured one:—and such a wife as yours is—an angel, almost!"

Again he paused; then, suddenly, bowing his head upon the table, burst into an agony of tears.

"Oh, Gordon!"—between his terrible, passionate sobs: "I only wish to spare you what I am going through. She was beautiful . . . and so young . . . so many temptations. I might have helped her . . . taught her . . . but my coldness made her reckless; and there is no recall. Dead . . . in the grave . . . buried . . ."

James, as he stood helplessly by, felt that this anguish was very dreadful. But what, however dreadful, asked a voice in his heart, was this—was it not as nothing—compared with the anguish which might be—God only knew—might be in store for himself?

Raynton was gone; and an irresistible impulse attracted James's steps toward the drawing-room, where Gabrielle sat alone. No—not alone: he suddenly recollected that two of the little Edgcombuses were spending the afternoon with her. The door was open; he heard their voices—and hers in reply. He paused in the anteroom, under the pretext of searching for a book. No such pretext, however, was needed; his approach had neither been heard nor seen by the trio in the adjoining apartment. All were engrossed in a story; one telling, the others listening. He still paused; listening also, to Gabrielle's voice:

"And so, you see, her wish was granted. She had all the happiness that she had craved; but somehow it did not satisfy her, or fill her heart. Still she knew it to be the greatest, brightest happiness that she could hope to find, under the sky; beside it, every other kind seemed dry and uninteresting. Thus God had answered her prayer; He had given her the chief earthly good."

"Had He, indeed? You say it did not fill her heart."

"Because—as she then, for the first time, realized, no earthly good can quite fill our hearts. She had often been told this before; and she had fancied that she believed it: just as I now tell you the same, dears, and you think that you believe me. But, most likely, you will never—any more than she—take it really in, until you learn it, as, if God spare you, you must one day learn it, for yourselves."

"So what did the poor girl do?"

"She went again to the angel; and she said: 'You were right; I feel it now; I am made, not for earth, but for heaven. For I have tasted the highest earthly good, and—sweet though it was—it has come short of my expectations. Now I am quite ready; I have nothing now to keep me back. Take me to heaven. My chief good is there.'"

"And did he take her?"

"No, not directly. He said: 'Well, I am glad you have learned that lesson. I knew you would learn it some time; because you had asked God to teach you, and there is no teacher like God. And you shall go with me, soon; but not yet: for, first, you have a few more lessons to learn, and a little more work to do, here.'"

"Poor girl! How sorry she must have been!"

"She did feel rather sorry: because she was so very tired of this weary life, and she longed so very much to fly away to her Chief Good. But she tried to be patient, to learn quickly, and to work well; that she might get free the sooner. And she was glad that the attainment of her desire had failed to fill her heart; because otherwise she might never have been contented to leave this earth and go higher. She had not been so, you know, at first."

"No; she had cried, I remember, when the call came. She had cried, and fallen at the angel's feet, and said, 'I cannot go.'"

"Yes.—Now she was wiser:"—The story went on; but James heard no more. His thoughts had gone back, nearly three years, to the time just before his marriage. Again he felt about his neck the clinging arms; again, the wistful voice, half smothered in sobs, exclaimed: "Oh, James, I hope I shall not die. I could not bear to leave you."

Yes; that was then. But now? What had he just heard the same voice say?

"Now she was wiser."

And, doubtless, it was well that she should be wiser; but whence had this sad wisdom come? What was it that had wearied her of life? What was it that had driven her to kneel at the gates of heaven, knocking for a refuge—ah, from whom? Suppose those gates should open, and receive her—and then shut again—shut out him!

On the table lay a volume of Adelaide Procter's poetry. Hardly aware of what he did, James opened it; and was about to close it in like manner, when his eyes were arrested by certain lines; he paused and read them. It was one

those chances—falsely so called—which sometimes, in our common, every-day life, remind us of Providence, although unseen, is an Omnipotent Fact:

"Over an ancient scroll I bent,
Steeping my soul in wise content;
Nor paused a moment, save to chide
A low voice whispering at my side.

"I wove beneath the stars' pale shine,
A dream, half-human, half-divine;
And shook off (not to break the charm)
A little hand laid on my arm.

"I read, until my heart would glow
With the great deeds of long ago;
Nor heard, while with those mighty dead
Pass to and fro a faltering tread.

"On the old theme I pondered long—
The struggle between right and wrong;
I could not check such visions high,
To soothe a little quivering sigh.

"I tried to solve the problem—Life;
Dreaming of that mysterious strife,
How could I leave such reasonings wise,
To answer two blue pleading eyes?

"I strove how best to give, and when,
My blood to save my fellow-men;
How could I turn aside, to look
At snow-drops laid upon my book?

"Now Time has fled—the world is strange,
Something there is of pain and change.
My books lie closed upon the shelf;
I miss the old heart in myself.

"I miss the sunbeams in my room—
It was not always wrapped in gloom:
I miss my dreams, they fade so fast,
Or flit into some trivial past.

"The great stream of the world goes by,
None care, or heed, or question why
I, the lone student, cannot raise
My voice or hand, as in old days.

"No echo seems to wake again
My heart to any thing but pain,
Save when a dream of twilight brings
The fluttering of an angel's wings."

Thunderstruck, James closed the book. The verses might have been written by him.

The "low voice" at his side—the "hand on his arm"—the "faltering tread passing to and fro"—the "little quivering sigh"—the "pleading eyes;"—he knew them all. And the four verses; what if, ere long—?

He turned shuddering from the anteroom; hurried, rather than walked, out of the house; for the moment, conscious that he wanted he was half-stified; light—all seemed suddenly dark.

CHAPTER LII.

"O Laurence! O pitié! reviens, pardonne moi!"

Je me croyais un Dieu! Non, je n'étais qu'un homme.
Je mandis mon triomphe avant qu'il se consommât;
Je me repens cent fois de ma fausse vertu.
Ah! s'il est temps encor, Laurence, m'entends-tu?
Je me jette à tes pieds, je l'outre pour la vie,
Ces bras."

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE.

JAMES did not appear at dinner; but this was no uncommon circumstance; and Gabrielle, having dined alone, returned to the drawing-room, prepared for another link in her long series of solitary evenings. Feeling chilly, she ordered a fire; and when it was lighted, and Wilcox, retiring, had shut her in, she knelt down before it, to enjoy for a few minutes—so far as, in these days, she could enjoy any thing—its light and warmth. The few minutes were becoming many; and she was dreamily pondering her usual occupations, with a view to choosing one—when the door opened; she looked round, and saw James.

"Oh, you have got a fire," said he; and she noticed something unnatural, something forced, in his voice. "That's a good move. The evening has turned out uncommonly cold."

He drew forward a chair, as he spoke; and sat down, in front of the blaze.

"You must be cold, indeed; you are so pale, James!" said Gabrielle, timidly. "Have you dined?"

"Don't mention dining. The bare notion makes me sick—with this confounded headache."

"Does your head ache? I am so sorry. Please give yourself one evening's rest, and let me try to cure it."

"You, child! How can you cure it?"

His tone was rough; but beneath the roughness, Gabrielle's quick ear detected more of tenderness than he had, for long, betrayed. She gathered courage; sprang to her feet; and wheeled the most comfortable sofa in the room close to the fire. Then smoothed and arranged the pillows; and, hanging over his chair:

"James," she said; "do come and lie down. You can't think how soft these cushions are; and really you look so very, very pale."

"Well!"—somewhat ungraciously—"perhaps I had better—I couldn't write a line, in this state."

Rising wearily, he stretched himself full-length upon the sofa; and, much to Gabrielle's

satisfaction, closed his eyes. A minute later, however, he opened them, and found that she had slipped out of the room.

"Ah, she thinks she's done her duty, and the sooner she can escape, the better! Well—no wonder!" And he sighed heavily, as his eyes, unable to bear the light, closed once more.—But the sigh was superfluous. In another moment, she was back; by his side.

"James, I have been to fetch my eau-de-Cologne. May I put some on your forehead?"

"Oh, don't bother yourself about me. Go to your work, or whatever you like. I shall be all right, when I have lain here half an hour."

For answer, he felt on his forehead a soft, cold handkerchief, saturated with the delicious eau-de-Cologne. He could not restrain an exclamation of relief; and Gabrielle was fully rewarded. She knelt by his side, as he still lay with closed eyes, and face turned from the light; and when, under the influence of the fever in his brow, the handkerchief grew hot, she gently removed it, substituting another—fresh and fragrant like the first.

"Is that cooler, dearest?" said this "ministering angel," as her little soft hands busied themselves in spreading it on his forehead.

"Cooler?" he cried, passionately. "No. It is hot—burning hot. Coals of fire."

She understood; venturing, albeit timidly, to slide her hand into his. He took it, raised it to his lips; and then, instead of letting it go, clasped over it his other hand also, and held it fast—pressed to his heart.

Thus, for half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, they remained; silent and motionless; Gabrielle, if not positively happy, at peace—forgetting the past, ignoring the future; James—ah, peace had no place with him, to judge from his contracted brow, from the troubled lines in which his mouth was set. Outwardly he was still; but inwardly, who could tell what storms were raging?

Suddenly Gabrielle, raising her head from the sofa-pillow, saw that his face was of an almost deathlike whiteness. He looked ill, she thought—terribly ill. She began to feel alarmed.

"James," she said, forcing her voice into calmness, "James, is your head any better?"

"What?" he asked, rousing himself, as from a dream, and looking bewildered. "Did you speak?"

"I asked how you felt, dear—if your head were better?"

"Better?" he repeated, still dreamily. "No;

it is worse. I can't imagine what has come to me. I never had such a headache before."

"Would you not like to go to bed?"

"Well, I see no use in staying here;" and he half rose.

"Stay—let me light your candle," cried Gabrielle; but he detained her, clasped her in his arms.

"Gabrielle, why will you wait upon me?"

"Why? It is my duty."

"Your duty! I see. Well—I deserve no more." He released his hold; but she still lingered.

"And my privilege, too, and my delight, as you know, or ought to know." She looked at him reproachfully, her eyes dim.

"Gabrielle," he said again, in a faltering voice, drawing her back, "Gabrielle, will you forgive me?"

"Is there any thing to forgive?" said Gabrielle, gently. Then, after a moment's pause:

"You could not help growing tired of me. I told you, at first, that I could never satisfy you—that I was not clever enough, or interesting enough, for you. I have tried to be a good wife, and to please you; but I have failed. I think I ought not to have married you."

Her voice, though very quiet, trembled. Oh, how sharp, at this moment, were the pangs of his self-condemnation, his remorse! For the first time he caught a glimpse of the depths of conflict, of hopelessness, into which, through him, and his dire egotism, this young, lowly spirit had, for months, for years, been plunged. She had tried to be a good wife. Oh, and had she not succeeded? more than succeeded? Was it her fault that she had been repulsed, discouraged? And now, how meekly—how like an angel—she endeavored to excuse him, to take the blame on herself!

"You could not help growing tired of me!"

The words maddened him. He held her closer to his breast; he called her his own—his darling—his most precious wife; he told her that he never had grown tired of her—that he never could, while life remained—that the fault was his alone—that he had been a villain, a selfish, heartless, self-deceived villain; yet, if she could forgive him, only forgive him. . . . He would have proceeded, but a mist obscured his eyes; the room and his head reeled together. A deadly giddiness had seized him; he could only fall back upon the cushions, and there lie, half conscious, till it was passed.

Early on the ensuing afternoon Charlie Godfrey rode up to the Farnley door. Having rung, he waited long; no one came; an air of unusual stillness pervaded the place. He rang again; another long pause. At last Wilcox appeared.

"Mr. or Mrs. Gordon at home?"

"Yes, sir—" with portentous gravity. "Both are at home, sir. But I have orders to admit no visitors. Master—"

He was interrupted. Flying down-stairs, and across the hall, with pale cheeks and frightened eyes, came Gabrielle.

"I was at the window—I saw you—I am so glad. Do come in."

Hardly knowing what she did, in her breathless distress, she laid her hand upon his arm, and drew him toward the drawing-room. In the ante-room she paused, sinking on a chair, as though all her strength were gone.

"My dear Gabrielle, what is the matter?"

"Charlie, you must advise me. James"—her voice did not falter—"James is very ill. Dr. Wallace is almost sure that he has caught this terrible, malignant scarlet fever. For myself, I am quite sure. Ten days ago he was at Holt's farm; and old Holt"—her voice did falter now—"old Holt died of it yesterday."

"I know . . . so I heard," said Charlie.

"Yes. But now—I wanted your advice. What was it? let me see;" and she raised her hand to her eyes. "Oh, I remember. Charlie, Cissy is on her way here. She was to come for a long visit—to reach Rotherbridge by the 6.20 train. What am I to do? It is too late to stop her; no telegram would find her; and yet she must not enter this house. She has never had the scarlet fever."

"You have had it yourself?" said Charlie, anxiously.

"Oh, yes; long ago.—Think of Cissy. What is to be done?"

"Couldn't they take her in at the vicarage?" said Charlie, pondering. "Or, stop! I'll ride on at once—this minute—to Lorton. My aunt is at home; she will be delighted, and Euphrosyne, also, to have her there. I'll arrange it all; and then—"

"Wait, Charlie—you are too quick—you puzzle me," said poor Gabrielle, who looked as though "the burden laid upon her was greater than she could bear." "And how do you know that Lady Louisa will be delighted? Pray be careful; I should not like you to force Cissy on her against her will."

"I won't—I vow I won't," said Charlie, con-

solingly. "I'll be quite candid—come back and tell you exactly how the land lies. But now there's no time to lose."

He lingered, only, to relieve his kindly heart, by a few hurried words of comfort; then snatched up his hat, and rode away "on the wings of the wind."

A few hours later Cissy, from the window of a railway-carriage, was eagerly renewing her acquaintance with the familiar buildings, the spires, and chimneys of Rotherbridge.

"Oh, dear! how homelike it all is; and how delightful to think that, in another ten minutes, I shall really be on my road to Farnley! I expect to have a good deal to do in the cheerifying line. Gabrielle's letters have had a strong savor of the slough of despond, lately. Poor little thing! I wonder if James neglects her? I half suspected it last winter; though the house was so full of people, and we stayed so short a time, and she—darling! was so close on the subject, and so careful to represent him as a model of all virtue, that I could not be sure. But this time I will watch; and—Why, there's Mr. Godfrey!"

For now the train had slowly steamed into the station, and Charlie stood on the platform, surveying first one carriage, then another, as they passed in review before him.

"Mr. Godfrey!" said Cissy, laughing, as he opened her door; "to what am I indebted, etc., etc.? Has Gabrielle sent you? and why? I can't make it out."

Then, leading her some paces aside from the throng of porters and box-hunters, he told her—a little awkwardly, but very kindly—of all that had occurred.

Which so disappointed and so confounded poor Cissy, that, much against her will, she was surprised into shedding a few irrepressible tears. Whereupon Charlie was greatly concerned, and earnestly besought her not to mind; assuring her that he was awfully sorry, that all would come right in time; and anon—wherefore, she knew not—the tears ceased, she began to smile again, and to feel greatly consoled. Then, having collected her traps, he escorted her to the carriage, placed her and her maid inside, mounted the box himself; and they drove to Lorton.

Here a warm welcome greeted her. Lady Louisa, overjoyed at this opportunity of appearing in her true character, as a ministering, a succoring angel—Lady Louisa seemed in danger of melting away—so intense was her commiseration. Euphrosyne was no less sympathizing; but in a manner more to Cissy's taste. Ianthé and

the younger girls, as always, echoed their sister. To crown all, Charlie stayed to dinner; and afterward, while Lady Louisa—her face concealed by the flaxen ringlets—slumbered on the sofa, and the two girls sang and played with Miss Reinheldt; he established himself by Cissy's side, putting forth all his powers in the attempt to cheer her up.

And she supposed it was her sisterly anxiety that caused the thrill of delight with which, when he departed, she heard him promise to bring the news of her brother, every day.

CHAPTER LIII.

"A leaning and upbearing parasite,
Clothing the stem, which else had fallen quite."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE haughty spirit which had defied its Maker to bind it against its will, was now, as in just retribution, bound as it had never been bound before; and sent to wander in the wilderness of delirium. James lay helpless upon his bed; that glorious forehead, at once the evidence and the shrine of the glorious intellect—God's gift, yet God's enemy—flushed with internal fever; those eyes, worthy "windows of the soul" whom they served, weakened and closed; those lips whence eloquence and power had so often issued, parched, dry—yet incessantly moving to give vent to incoherent ravings.

"Gabrielle, I love you; I cannot help it; it is my nature. But why—why—why?"

He opened his dark eyes, and raised them appealingly to her face.

"Gabrielle—why—?"

"What is it, dearest?" she asked, bending toward him. But he did not hear. His eyes had closed again; he had wandered farther.

"She mistook me. She thought I was tired of her. Her heart broke. She is where Raynton's wife is. He said so. Where is that? I must—oh, I must!—If she is in heaven, there! If she is in hades, there! 'Where thou goest, I will go, and there will I—be—'"

He broke off suddenly, with a pitiful cry:

"Gabrielle—Gabrielle—"

"I am here, James." She clasped his hand; and the cry died away.

"I will lift her in my arms; I will carry her back. The angels shall not keep her. I was a fool. I could never—could I?—could I?"

Again he opened his eyes; again that appealing gaze.

"No, I never could grow tired of her. She was 'a good wife.' She was the best of all wives—the sweetest. But the gates are shut. I cannot open them; and no one comes. I hear her voice inside. But she does not hear me. How can I make her hear me?—Gabrielle—Gabrielle!"

"Yes, dear; here I am. I am with you, close to you."

Once more, for a little while, the cry ceased.

"I forgot she would be lonely. She used to come and sit behind my chair. She never disturbed me. It was not because I had ceased to love her. It was because I loved her too much—too much."

"Why did she never complain? Why was she so patient? Why was she always so gentle and so sweet? It breaks my heart; it consumes me. I would rather she had frowned—rebelled—hated me. Why was she so patient? Why?—Was she an angel?"

He opened his eyes, and looked, with an awed, rapt wonder, far into some spiritual distance.

"Was she an angel?" he repeated, slowly; "I thought I heard 'the fluttering of an angel's wings.'"

He paused for a minute or so; still looking into the distance.

"In her coffin. Asleep forever. Her eyelashes drooped on her cheek; her face was thin. They told me she was glad to—to—was that her voice? It came from somewhere up above. It said that some one had ceased to love her. Not I—I always loved her. But she could not know—"

Again he paused. Then, in a tone of startling clearness, rousing Olivia from a doze: "She could not look into my heart!"

"Poor fellow, how very sad this is! What is he rambling about now?" said Olivia, approaching, her eyes full of tears.

"Oh, don't listen; it is nothing," cried Gabrielle, hurriedly; "don't listen. Go back to your chair—please!"

Olivia wondered, but obeyed; and Gabrielle bent low over the pillow.

"My own dearest James, I am here. I am not dead!"

"What is that to me? Gabrielle is dead. You cannot bring back Gabrielle. I thought I was rising—high—high—beyond God, even. But her heart broke."

"Is it a glorious thing, to rise by trampling another down? To rise alone—thinking of self only. Is it? No—no—no."

"Hush, dear; try to be calm," she whispered, laying her hand upon his lips. He held it fast.

"For better, for worse—in sickness and in health—to love and to cherish, till—till—is any thing higher than God? Am I higher? They say love comes from God. Then is not love a high thing? Is not love a grand thing? Can man crush what is higher and grander than man?"

"He must be coming to himself," thought Gabrielle, "or he could not reason so!"

"James," she said, gently; but he did not answer; and, ere long, he was wandering in renewed confusion.

Thus, day after day, night after night, he lay, while she watched and listened helplessly; only, when Olivia or the nurse was by, trying to divert their attention; to explain away his self-reproaches, to impress upon them the exceeding wildness of his ramblings.

His life hung on a thread; and it was impossible to decide whether or no that thread would break. Gabrielle neither hoped nor feared; she merely existed, from hour to hour. Sometimes, indeed, came to her mind the startling, the awful question: "Is he ready to meet his God?" But she had not courage to dwell upon it. She could only, as though her clasp would retain him, hold his feverish hand the faster: and bury her face in the pillow: and pray—and pray.

Nine days had he thus hovered between this world and the next. As the ninth night drew near, his wanderings ceased; he fell into a heavy sleep. Gabrielle herself had, for several hours, been dropping off to sleep at intervals. Her strength was all but gone. Still, so long as the delirium lasted, and her absence, even through that delirium, so troubled him, Olivia could not persuade her to leave his side. Now, however, she yielded; and, having begged that she might be called the instant he awoke, retired to an adjoining room: where, lying down, she also fell into a deep and dreamless slumber.

Dr. Wallace had intended to pass this night at Farnley; but, toward eleven o'clock, a messenger summoned him to a still more urgent case; and he departed, promising to return as speedily as possible. Olivia and the nurse were left to maintain a strict watch: how strict, we need not determine. The nurse certainly dropped off, now and then; and Olivia frequently found herself dead to every thing on earth, save the difficulty of keeping her eyes open. The fire flickered dreamily; the lamp burned low; the heavy breathing from the bed evinced the profundity of James's sleep. So the night wore on.

The clock in the passage struck two. Olivia started. She had, despite her efforts, been overcome by a doze. So, at any rate, she supposed: her senses had been wandering. She had been sitting in a nursery—long closed: and holding on her knee a little dark-eyed boy, called James. And as the clock struck, he was looking into her face, lisping some name—not her own, she thought—but a stranger's: the name of Gabrielle.

Hark! She was wide awake now; yet the name was repeated.

"Gabrielle—are you there?"

It was James's voice; his own, his natural voice. Sunken indeed, and feeble: but the wildness was entirely gone.

"Gabrielle—are you there?"

"She is gone to lie down, dear boy. I will call her," said Olivia, suppressing her agitation.

His eyes were open; the feverish flush had faded.

"Is that Olivia?"

"Yes, I am here—at your side. Do not you see me?"

"I see nothing," he answered, with an awful solemnity. "It is all dark.—Yes, call Gabrielle. I think—" the solemnity deepened—"I think I must be dying."

Pale, prepared for the worst; yet calm—far calmer than Olivia; the young wife entered: stole to her place beside his pillow, bent and kissed him.

"James," she said; "I am here."

He strained his eyes toward her. He strove, he vainly strove, to see her. He groped feebly for her hand.

"Do you want my hand, dearest? Here it is."

He took it, held it convulsively.

"Gabrielle, there is a light in the room?"

"Yes, dear; a lamp."

"And you can see me?"

"Yes; quite plainly."

"I cannot see you, Gabrielle. I cannot see any thing. All is darkness; the Shadow of Death."

Olivia's sobs thickened; she was obliged to retire to the other end of the room. The nurse withdrew to rouse the servants and to dispatch a messenger to Dr. Wallace. But still the young, pale wife—as though upheld by some Higher Aid—remained composed and motionless. And when she spoke, her voice, in itself, brought soothing: so calm was it—so gentle.

"Would you like to see Mr. Edgecumbe, dear?"

"Presently; not yet. Just now I want you; only you.—Gabrielle—" once more that solemn tone—"I did not expect to die so soon—so young."

Again—stifling a little cry, a cry of despair—she bent and kissed him.

"That sweet, gentle, forgiving kiss.—Gabrielle, I see all now. I have been selfish—bad; a wicked, cruel husband to you—my gift from Heaven."

"Hush, dear; never mind. I know now, that you did love me."

"Love you? Yes. In my blindness, I thought I loved you too well. I had set up in my mind a chimerical ideal; 'a golden image.' I could not worship that, and you too: so you were sacrificed. For I thought, only of myself; never of my marriage-vows, and your loneliness—my child."

That "My child" was too much for Gabrielle. It recalled the old days too forcibly. Those old, happy, blessed days: were they all ended? She burst into tears.

"Don't cry; I am not worth it. Only say that you forgive me; and, if it be not too much, that you will try to forget these last two hateful years."

"I will do any thing—any thing that you ask me, James." She clung to him, kissing him passionately.

"Your sweetness—your patience and goodness: they will be recompensed in heaven:—by God—if never by me."

His voice failed, and an ashy paleness overspread his face. Gabrielle thought that the last terrible moment was come; but the nurse administered cordials, and he revived. Tightening his clasp of that thin little hand—awe in his eyes:

"I never remembered—" he said—"that I could die."

Then—in a tone which seemed to pierce the hearts of the watchers:

"Where shall I go? . . . What shall I be? . . . When my eyes are opened, what shall I see?"

Ah, what? Who could answer? Who, of all that people the earth? Who, of all the wise men, the mighty thinkers?

"I thought Reason omnipotent; but Reason fails me here. Science—philosophy—all fails. All is nothing: less than nothing. So am I."

He trembled—he so strong, so proud!

"James, dearest—" whispered the sweet voice of his good angel, at his side; "think of our Saviour. He will not fail."

"I cannot, Gabrielle. It is too late."

"It is never, never, James, too late to pray."

"Gabrielle, I have rebelled too long. I dare not pray."

"Then—" said she—"I will."

And still clinging to him, with the passionate clasp that, in itself, seemed an appeal to the All-Merciful; still holding fast his hand; her tears still wet on his forehead: she—this young, weak being whom, in his pride of intellect, he had deemed so far below him—lifting her voice in the silent room, through the darkness which encompassed him; led, as himself he could not lead, him, the powerful philosopher, the self-sufficient, to the foot of the Cross.

CHAPTER LIV.

"Thank God, who made me blind, to make me see."
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

"Cissy!" exclaimed Euphrosyne Pembroke, bursting into the room where Cissy, somewhat pensively, sat—professing to read: "Can you come down-stairs? Charlie wants to speak to you; and I am sure he has brought good news."

"What makes you sure?" cried Cissy, starting up.

"Oh! his manner. I asked him to tell me, that I might tell you; but no: he said that he must tell you himself."

They were at the drawing-room door, by this time; and it was doubtless to the speed of their descent, that the heightened color on Cissy's cheeks was owing: as Charlie—who was found pacing the room, with no slight degree of impatience—advanced to meet her.

"I have glorious news for you. Your brother is really on the mend. Wallace has pronounced him out of danger."

"Is that all?" cried the naïve Euphrosyne. Then—as both looked at her, astonished—blushing, and hastening to explain:

"I did not mean—it was only—I thought this piece of news must be very particular indeed. Charlie seemed so wonderfully anxious to tell you himself."

"And is it not very particular indeed?" said Charley, smiling, though with something of embarrassment. "Here's a note—" he added, turning again to Cissy—"from Miss Gordon. She was on the point of sending it by a servant, when I called, and volunteered to save him the walk."

"You will stay to dinner, Charlie?" said

Euphrosyne, as Cissy tore open the envelope, and proceeded to devour its contents.

"Well, I don't know. Euphrosyne, come with me; I want to see the new croquet set."

Drawing her hand through his arm, he manoeuvred her—very cleverly, Cissy thought—out of Cissy's way.

And he did stay to dinner.

"FARNLEY, *Thursday afternoon.*

"MY DEAREST CISSY: I have not time, and am too tired besides, to write more than a few lines; but the day must not pass without your hearing the joyful news that our beloved James is, humanly speaking, out of danger. To us who have been with him, this borders on a miracle; for last night, the night of the crisis, we all thought that he was dying. He, poor fellow, was in terrible distress of mind; as so many of our best and greatest have been, in similar circumstances:—the best, dear Cissy, are ever the humblest. I will not dwell upon this; but will only say that, dearly as I have loved Gabrielle, never, till then, was I conscious of her true worth. She was the strongest of us all; how I wish you could have seen her—yes, and heard her! but I must postpone details. I think it was her presence that soothed him, at last, into a tranquil sleep: from which he only awoke at ten o'clock this morning,—the crisis past, the fever gone. It has left him, of course, deplorably weak; but his constitution is so vigorous, that, with common care, Dr. Wallace foresees no difficulty in bringing him round. There is, only one drawback—a dreadful one: I have not dared, as yet, to suggest it to Gabrielle. He is, at present, quite blind; and Dr. Wallace fears that the optic nerve may have sustained—as, in these malignant fevers, is not unusual—some irreparable injury. At first—last night's horror fresh in my mind—I felt that nothing, so long as his life were spared, could materially afflict us. But when I try to realize—however, I will write, and, if possible, think no more, of this calamity, now. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

"Poor darling Gabrielle has not escaped the natural reaction from what I must call her supernatural calmness and self-command. I am writing beside her sofa; Dr. Wallace insists on her spending one day of entire rest; and she is now lying in a dreamy state, half awake, half asleep; and looking—poor dear child—far less fit for this world than for the next. I fear James misses her sadly; but he is very patient; and I trust that she will have full time to gather in a stock of strength for whatever may be to come. James

blind!—but I dare not dwell on this; and my time is gone; so good-by, dear Cissy.

"By-the-by, pray remember your goloshes; and if you should be caught in the rain, at any time, be sure to take some camphor.

"Believe me always,

"Your affectionate sister,

"OLIVIA.

"P. S.—Mr. Godfrey has just called, and begs so politely to be allowed to carry this letter, that I have consented, though somewhat against my will:—I object, on principle, of riding a willing horse to death."

Dr. Wallace's suspicions, Olivia's fears, were too surely realized. James came up from the gates of death, bearing with him one lasting memorial of all that he had learned and suffered there; one ineffaceable stamp: the stamp of blindness. He never saw, with mortal eyes, again.

All that could be done, was done; but all failed. Two celebrated oculists came from London; this, however, merely to satisfy Olivia and Gabrielle: for Dr. Wallace, even while summoning them, knew well, that, in this case, celebrity was useless. The optic nerve was, as he had feared, irreparably injured. There was no visible defect. The bright, dark, beautiful eyes were still as bright, as dark, as beautiful as ever. The gifted soul still lightened them from within; but they no longer lightened the soul.

It was long before any one could summon courage to inform James of this—it could not but be called—terrible trial. At last, Olivia, having screwed up her fortitude to an elevated pitch, proposed to take the painful task upon herself. But Gabrielle declined. She alone, she had from the beginning determined, must apprise her husband of what she feared he would regard as a death-blow to his hopes of fame.

One afternoon—a still, melancholy November afternoon—he was sitting, very pale, very weak, very thin, in Gabrielle's dressing-room. She had been reading the leading article to him, in a voice which, every now and then, faltered, and threatened to die away. She was glad when she had finished, and could lay the paper down, drawing her seat a little nearer to his, and resting her head upon his shoulder. Somehow, this seemed to nerve her; to give her strength for the undertaking which, now that he was so far recovered, she had resolved must be postponed no longer.

"You are out of spirits this afternoon, Gabri-

elle. Tired?" said he, at last; while his eyes by instinct sought her face; and rested on it.

"No, I am not tired, thank you."

"Then you are not well—something is the matter. I wish—" he burst out, with his old vehemence—"I wish this confounded blindness—" Then, suddenly checking himself, and subduing his tone: "When does Wallace expect my eyes to be right again?"

"I am afraid—not for a very long time," began Gabrielle; then stopped. Her manner struck him; gave form to a vague dread which had, during several days, been hovering in his own mind.

Pale as he was before, he now became paler; then flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Gabrielle, you are concealing something. Don't be afraid. Tell me the worst. I can bear it."

Still she paused; articulation failed her.

"This blindness is likely to last some time? Years perhaps?"

Still that silence. His agitation increased.

"Those fellows who came over with Wallace; they were oculists, I suppose. What did they advise, Gabrielle? What did they say?"

"They said—oh, James! it is a heavy trial . . . but we must bear it—" Her voice broke.

He had a shade over his eyes. It was a pre-tence merely; placed there—as now he saw—to baffle his suspicions. Passionately, with trembling hands, he tore it from him; flung it to the other end of the room.

"Am I a child?"—said he, hoarsely—"that they should humbug me like this?"

Then he sat speechless; his arms folded.

"James!"—he felt Gabrielle's kisses and tears together on his face; heard, close at his ear, her eager voice, struggling through sobs. "James—I will see for you. I will write for you—read for you—every thing. You shall lose nothing—that I can supply. And perhaps . . . though, at first, it seems so hard . . . perhaps, in time, you may be able to feel resigned."

"I am resigned now," he answered, with a strange, fixed calmness; "I am resigned. I acknowledge that it is just."

"How do you mean, James?"

He sat immovable, his arms still folded.

"I defied God, my Creator, to bind me against my will. Now I see what His power is; and what mine is. Yes, Gabrielle—He has humbled me, and it is just."

"But you shall be humbled no more than I

can help—dearest!" She had never loved him so much; he had never seemed to her so truly noble, as now.

"It will not humble you to be waited on by me—a part of yourself?"

"Will it not? Yes, to the dust. I am not worthy that the same roof should cover us. Suppose we had both died, the week before last? You would be in heaven now, and I—"

"Ah, James!"—a fearful shudder convulsed her whole frame; he felt it, as she clung to him—"ah, James—don't. I cannot bear it."

"My child, I won't. I won't do or say any thing to vex you any more, to my life's end—that I can help. But you need not wonder if the blindness seem almost a trifle to me, after—and yet—"

He paused; for, as he spoke, came realization; belying his words.

"Yet—never to see again. Never again . . ."

Once more—long—long—he paused.

Then, slowly, as striving to take it in:

"Never again the woods . . . the fields . . . the sun . . . my books . . . your face, Gabrielle . . ."

Gropingly, uncertainly, he put out his arms; drew his little comforter to his breast; and they wept together.

CHAPTER LV.

"How little we know! when I thought that I, Like a helpless ship, was cast On the hard, bleak rocks of some desert coast, God was guiding me, sure and fast, Leading me home by wonderful ways, To a blessed haven at last."

ELIZABETH D. CROSS.

THE second week in December witnessed a general *réunion* at Farnley. James, Gabrielle, and Olivia, returned, after a month at Hastings; and on the following day were joined by Cissy; who had been making a little tour of visits among her Yorkshire friends. James and Olivia were out when she arrived; and Gabrielle alone was waiting to receive her; of which arrangement Cissy highly approved. The cousins were speedily seated, side by side, upon the crimson sofa in that cosy little room which had been Olivia's room in former days—and which still retained its name.

"Well, dear! you have gone through a good deal since we met last," said Cissy; all preliminaries of small talk and small pieces of information having been duly interchanged.

"I have, indeed," replied Gabrielle, with a sigh; "and so has poor James."

"James! ah, well—" Cissy stopped abruptly. She had been about to add—"James deserved it."

"He is quite well again, now," went on Gabrielle, not seeming to notice either the exclamation or the pause; "and, in time, I trust he may grow more accustomed to this dreadful blindness."

"It is dreadful!" said Cissy, shuddering.

"Yes; and he bears it so well. He is so patient—never complains. I believe—" and she colored—"I believe, Cissy, you will see a great change in him, in more ways than one. You used to think him conceited. ('A mild way of stating the case!'" thought Cissy.) But now his failings are all on the other side. He is sometimes so despairing about himself, and his own deficiencies; he sinks quite down into the depths."

"And then, I suppose, you haul him up again. What would he do without you?"

"He does call me his comfort—" Gabrielle acknowledged, smiling; "but now, Cissy, I want to hear about yourself. How have you been getting on? Do tell me—outwardly and inwardly."

"Outwardly, much as usual," said Cissy, looking remarkably sober.

"But inwardly? Cissy, I am sure you are unhappy. I saw it directly you came."

And in her old caressing way, she nestled to Cissy's side. Cissy hesitated for a moment; then burst into an impetuous and a truly Cissy-like fit of crying.

"Oh, Gabrielle, Gabrielle, your prophecy is fulfilled! My soul has come—and"—a gulp—"and a great bore it is!"

Gabrielle bit her lip to repress a smile; but Cissy sobbed on, none the wiser.

"Ever since I left Farnley, it has been growing. That horrid Brierly Lodge has been sea-air to it; and all my bothers there—my longings for home, etcetera—were its tonics. And lately—but never mind details; the result's enough. I've got a soul, a heart, like other people, now; and it will never go away; and I shall never, never, never be happy again."

"Why, Cissy! What can make you think so?" said Gabrielle, distressed; as the pretty head sank lower, and the tears coursed each other like rain-drops, over the *piquante* face; "your journey has tired you."

At this Cissy started up; dashed the tears away; and laughed spasmodically.

"You have caught Olivia's complaint, I declare! I was never less tired in my life. But never mind—I won't make myself ridiculous. They will be coming home directly; and Olivia sha'n't find me with red eyes. Talk, Gabrielle! Chatter! Gesticulate—any thing to keep my horrid soul from spouting out its tears, like this—as though it were proud of them, forsooth, and wished to show them off. I have no patience with it. Come, Gabrielle! Talk! Fire away!"

"Oh, by-the-by; I have heard nothing about your Lorton visit. Was Lady Louisa—"

"Lady Louisa! Don't mention her, just now, dear. My emotion has made me feel a tiny bit sick; and that might help it on. Besides—'Speak well of the bridge that carries you over,' next door to which, in my *morale*, comes: 'If you can't speak well of it, don't speak at all of it.' So, if you please, I won't speak at all of the esteemed Lady Louisa."

"Well, then—Charlie. Are you and he as good friends as ever?"

"If by 'Charlie,' you mean Mr. Godfrey, we are not," said Cissy, fiercely. "I have taken a violent dislike to him. In fact, I may say that I hate him—more than any one in the world."

"Why! has he offended you?" said Gabrielle, half puzzled, half amused.

"Not particularly. One can't account for one's prejudices. One can only feel them. And I feel that . . . I hate Mr. Godfrey."

Upon this, Cissy burst into a second fit of crying, more violent than the first. It was shorter, however; and soon, with a passionate little stamp, she took out her handkerchief, dried her tears resolutely—then threw herself into Gabrielle's arms.

"Gabrielle, don't think me a downright idiot! It is all my provoking soul. When I've had it longer, I shall manage it better; but, at present, it manages me."

Gabrielle kissed her soothingly; and was about to answer; when, with a sudden start—

"Hark!" she said; "there is James!"

Then, in the hall, Cissy heard a step; slow, uncertain; and at the door a hand, feeling, as in darkness, for the lock. Gabrielle sprang forward.

"Why are you alone? I thought Olivia was with you."

"She got out at the lodge, to see the sick child. Is Cissy here?"

He was in the room, by this time, leaning on

his wife. James—as tall, as handsome, as athletic-looking as ever. How strange it seemed that he should be leaning thus upon that frail young shoulder! that he should ask—gazing full in his sister's direction—"Is Cissy here?"

"Yes, Cissy is here. Take care, darling—let me move this footstool. Now it is all clear," said Gabrielle.

She guided him to the sofa; beside which Cissy, with misty eyes, had stood watching that sorrowful entrance.

"Well, Cissy!" He stooped and kissed her—tenderly, but sadly. His whole manner, his whole air, was saddened; and more—it was humbled. Cissy felt that, after all, she loved him dearly; this high-and-mighty brother of hers.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, James," she said, gently, as he sat down. Her heart was full; but nothing beyond this commonplace observation could find a way out of it.

"Thank you, Cissy. I am glad to see you"—he corrected himself—"to find you here. You must stay a long time, to make up for the visit of which I was so stupid as to rob you; and I hope you will do Gabrielle good."

"I wish I could do you good, I know—you dear, darling boy," cried Cissy, suddenly springing on him, with her vehement hug; "I've been a nasty, horrid, odious termagant; but you must forgive it; and I'll do my best to make you forget it. I'll never termagantize again; no, never no more."

"I wish I could venture to say that I would domineer no more; but I feel I'm not to be depended on," returned James, still sadly, though he smiled: "However, Cissy, we'll make a compact—'Bear and forbear,' on both sides."

Thus, while Gabrielle, well pleased, looked on, a lasting peace was established between this brother and sister; who, for so long, had lived in tacit enmity.

An hour later—the others having vanished their respective ways—Cissy was sitting alone; or rather, she was on her knees alone, hugging Gypsy; when the swinging of the door, and Wilcox's stentorian "Mr. Godfrey!" caused her to start—and rise, with heightened color.

Poor Cissy! to find herself *tête-à-tête* with this obnoxious being—the very Mr. Godfrey whom, as she had told Gabrielle, she hated more than any one in the world! However, since he was here, and no help for it—she must be civil. So she advanced, with a very pretty little smile; said,

"How do you do, Mr. Godfrey?" allowed him to take her hand, and to press it, holding it some what longer than was needful; finally invited her to be seated.

"I expected to find you here," he said, accepting the invitation.

"Did you? I only came this afternoon. Gypsy! get down."

"How is your brother?—and Gabrielle?"

"Thanks; James is pretty well, poor fellow. Gabrielle—she is pretty well too, I think. You will like to see her;" and Cissy rose; but he placed himself in her way, his manner strangely eager.

"Don't go—Wilcox will tell her—please stop. I want—I have scarcely seen any thing of you. Do sit down again. How long do you mean to stay at Farnley?"

"A month, I believe."

"Not longer?" His countenance fell. "I have to go away myself, the day after to-morrow; and I sha'n't get back under five weeks, at least; so I shall quite miss your visit."

"I suppose you are going abroad with your cousin?" said Cissy, bending over Gypsy; and swallowing once or twice, to repress an inclination to cry.

"Yes; I promised my uncle. It would need to disappoint them now. Otherwise—" Chatley paused, looking down on the carpet.

"And when I return, you will really be gone! all the way back to—"

"My beloved Brierly Lodge," concluded Cissy, smiling.

Another pause, long and embarrassing. Then, raising his eyes from the carpet to Cissy's face, and there fixing them, with an expression beneath which her own eyes sank:

"Miss Gordon," he said, "do you remember a time, more than three years ago, when I was awfully down in the mouth, and we—you and I—were coming in from a long talk in the park here? Just as we parted, you said, 'Cheer up, or something to that effect—'

'The darkest day,

Wait till to-morrow will have passed away.'

Do you remember that?"

"I think I do," replied Cissy, in a scarcely audible voice.

"An hour before, my own day had seemed darker than I can tell you. But when you said that, I felt as though a sunbeam had come gliding across it. And it has been as you said. The to-morrow has dawned; and the dark day to which you referred has passed quite away; and

the sunbeam"—he seized her hand—"the sunbeam has spread into a flood of light, and is filling my life. I needn't try to shut it out, Cissy—need I? It depends on you."

He paused, earnestly watching her. She made no answer; but she did not withdraw her hand.

"Cissy, if you will trust yourself to me, I will do my best to take care of you, and to make you happy. I love you with all my heart."

"And I believe," said Cissy—for the first time, half shyly returning his glance—"I believe (though I've not had one very long, so don't know much about it) that, with a little bit of mine, I . . . like you."

The immediate sequel of this confession, dependent recordeth not. But when Gabrielle, who had been detained up-stairs, descended, she found that Cissy, by some mysterious inconsistency, had bestowed herself—as property unalienable and unredeemable—on the person whom she hated more than any one in the world!

CHAPTER LXI.

"At last he raised himself a little, again listened, and then said: 'It is over. The sound of the bells is very sweet. We have overcome.'"

Translated from the Baron de la Motte Fouqué.

JAMES sat alone at his writing-table. His head was bowed upon his arms; beneath them lay a sheet of foolscap, whereon, running one into the other, were traced a few illegible and blotted lines. At a little distance, as though he had flung it impatiently from him, was a pen, in which the ink had dried, forming a thick black crust.

Suddenly, hearing the door open and a light footstep enter, he raised his face. It was worn, flushed, depressed.

"Is that Gabrielle?"

"Yes; I thought you were lost. What have you been doing? Writing?" She leaned over his shoulder, attempting to decipher the blotted lines.

"I tried to write," he said hopelessly. "The ideas were crowding on my mind. But it is of no use. I shall never be good for any thing any more;" and he heaved a great sigh.

Gabrielle, however, did not sigh. This was a moment for which she had long been on the watch.

"James," said she, still leaning on his shoulder, "I think I ought really to stick to you from

morning till night; for whenever you are left to yourself you sink into the Slough of Despond. One might think, to hear you talk, that you had lost your intellect, instead of your eyesight?"

"It is much the same," said James, despondingly.

"Oh, James! Remember all the great men who have been blind. Why, Homer was blind—and Huber—and Milton—and Eusebius; and a host besides. You can't do the manual part, certainly—though even that may come, in time. But you know, Philip has heard of a promising secretary, and Mr. Morris's old cottage is nearly ready for him; and he will very soon be here; and you will have his eyes and his fingers to use as you like."

"Ten to one, I shall find them as much plague as profit! There are all manner of books which I am obliged to refer to, and to read—or rather *was* obliged"—another great sigh; "and unless he's thoroughly *au fait* of the kind of thing—Then I must suit my time, more or less, to his. I can no longer work by fits and starts, whenever the mood falls on me. . . . Oh, Gabrielle!" resting his head against her, as she sat on the arm of the chair, "sometimes I am tempted to feel, like Cain, that my punishment is greater than I can bear. This state of dependence is galling to a degree!"

"Yes, dearest—I know!" Somehow it seemed less galling as she spoke; "but—James, don't call me conceited—I have set my heart on being your chief secretary myself. You see I shall be always at your beck and call; and I shall so enjoy reading what you want, to you—looking through the books, and—"

"My dearest child, almost all the books—for the century that I am about now—are in Latin."

"Well, James—" with a touch of pride—"what of that? I understand Latin; pretty well, at least—well enough to make notes for the secretary, under your directions."

"You understand Latin, Gabrielle?"

"I have been working at it, hard, these two years. I hope that, some time, if I learned it, I might be able to help you."

"These two years! While I was behaving like a blackguard to you, you were drudging away at Latin for me!—Well, never mind. I am contented, now, to be unworthy of you."

"A very improper state of mind, James. And now, suppose we set to work? I am quite ready."

"How do you mean?"

"You said that the ideas were crowding on

your mind. May I not write for you at once? Only, first, if you know of any books that we shall want, I'll go and hunt them out of the library."

"Stop one minute, my child. Come nearer." He drew her nearer, and laid his hand upon her head. Then, in a voice that faltered more than a little:

"God bless thee," he said; "and God requite thee, for I cannot."

"Well!" said Mr. Morris, wiping his spectacles the better to gaze at Charlie, with the dreamy yet affectionate gaze of old—"well! so you've fixed the day? What is it?"

"The eighteenth of June. The jolliest time of all the year! And we've fixed the place too; the places, rather. First the English lakes, then the Scotch lakes, and home by Edinburgh."

"A happy coming home may it be, my boy! Well!—Glad. Very glad. And thankful to have such an account"—his tone sank, while his eyes wandered from Charlie's face to the glass of roses on the table—"such an account to take her."

"Would you like to hear Cissy's letter?—part of it, at least—" said Charlie, his cheek flushing.

It was a journal letter; long, bright, and joyous, fully corroborating Charlie's simile of the sunbeam; and it ended thus:

"You remember my favorite theory—that we are formed to be happy? Even Brierley Lodge, you know, and its stagnations, have failed to crush that faith in me. And now it is established more firmly than ever. I am sure—quite sure—that it is true."

"It is true," said Mr. Morris, who had listened attentively, with a smile half amused, half melancholy. "It is true. Tell her so. We are formed to be happy. But—not in this life; in the life to come."

"I fancy 'tis chiefly this life that she means here," said Charlie, smiling.

"Yes, and even in this, we have glimpses—foretastes of what is coming. At least, some have; you and she, for instance. And very pleasant is it to those denied them, or past them, to see them thus in others. But they're liable to fade again. Tell her so. Only in the life immortal will God say: 'Be ye glad and rejoice forever.'"

"You must talk these things over with Cissy when she comes," said Charlie, reverentially.

"Ah! she'll learn for herself. Never fear. Gradually, bit by bit, she, and you—all in the

right school—will learn all. As for me"—and, mechanically, his dim eyes turned toward the western sky—"as for me, my holidays are fast approaching. It has been long, hard; the lessons difficult; but all for the best. Looking back, I see it. All for the best."

He was lost in a dream; and Charlie, who had parochial work to do, thought it a good opportunity to slip away. He walked forth into the village; his step elastic, and his heart bounding. Never, it seemed to him, had the voices of the children at their play sounded so merrily; never had the spring birds sung so sweetly; never had the hedges, the trees, just bursting into bloom, so testified of life, of hope, as to-day.

He was detained for some time among his cottages; and the "richest, tenderest glow" of a glorious sunset was fading, when he reentered the rectory-grounds. Through the window of Mr. Morris's study Charlie saw the rugged figure, seated, as usual, in the arm-chair, and before him, spread open, the voluminous manuscript of the introduction to a treatise on the Ten Missing Tribes. A pen was in his hand, but he was not writing. His head was bowed upon his chest; his spectacles were slipping from over his eyes; he had evidently been overcome by a doze.

Charlie, unwilling to disturb him, passed the room without entering, and went quietly up-stairs to dress. The dinner-bell surprised him before he was ready. He hurried his operations, and ran down at the pace of a school-boy.

The dining-room, however, was tenantless. Charlie opened the study-door. There, his back turned, Mr. Morris still sat. This doze was uncommonly heavy!

"Are you ready for dinner?" asked Charlie. There was no answer.

The young man approached the chair, and, standing behind it, saw that at length, on this very afternoon, the Introduction had been completed.

"Even so," ran the final sentence, "may we hope that a day will come when these lost ones will be reassembled; when He who gathereth together the outcasts of Israel, will gather them, and reunite them in one home, each to each—to part no more."

Suddenly, by an indefinable impulse, Charlie stooped and looked into the old man's face. It was very peaceful, very calm, but it was also colorless and lifeless. This sleep—so prolonged, so still—was the sleep of death.

They carried him up-stairs and laid him on his bed, facing westward. And through the closed

blinds, evening by evening, during the solemn week that followed, the rays which he had loved stole in, and hovered round him as he lay so quietly; his conflicts ended at last. Charlie mourned for him as a son mourns for a father; and when he was laid in his coffin, a spray of roses was laid by Charlie's hand upon his breast.

Later a marble cross was erected in Meddiscombe church-yard, with an inscription bearing the name of Brian Morris, his age, and the date of his death. And below a verse:

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Thus the Ten Missing Tribes are missing still!

CHAPTER LVII.

"He who will be wiser than his Maker, is but seeming wise. He who will deaden one-half of his nature, to invigorate the other half, will become at best a distorted prodigy."—JAMES STEPHEN.

"Nothing useless is, or low,
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show,
Strengthens and supports the rest."

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

JUNE—the second June after Mr. Morris's death—was opening brightly. The soft gray haze, in the early mornings; the long hot days that followed; the dewy evenings, so fragrant and so still: all gave promise of an ideal summer. Wild-roses abounded in the hedges: thrushes and linnets in the woods; the meadow grass, almost ready for cutting, scented the air like hay; and the usual swarm of heat-rejoicing insects—gnats, dragon-flies, bees—maintained a continuous, drowsy murmur.

Toward the close of one of the most radiant of these radiant days, James sat at the chapel-organ, playing the *Benedictus* of Beethoven's *Mass in C*. And while he played, his upturned face, and expression of rapt attention, showed that he was also listening, drinking in the sounds, as though another were the performer.

Finishing at length, with a half-sigh, he was conscious of a hand upon his shoulder, and a voice exclaiming:

"Oh, James! I wish it were not done. I could hear it forever."

He smiled; and turned round on his seat.

"So you are back at last? How long you stayed!"

"Did you miss me, dear? I hope not. I

came away as soon as possible after tea. I have been at home some time; only I went straight up-stairs, to get my dressing over, before joining you. I heard the organ, so felt sure you were happy."

"And how about your dinner?"

"Oh, severe teas are the fashion at Meddiscombe, you know; Olivia, Charlie, and I, had a very cosy one together. But, James, you don't ask after the baby. Such a duck!"

"You forget what a full description you gave me yesterday. I suppose his duckishness is not materially increased since then?"

"I don't know. Cissy declares that he grows sweeter every hour! Gypsy is quite superannuated; and as for Spitfire—she is sure that she will never care to look at him again."

"Well, come out on the terrace, and tell me all about every thing," said James, rising. "It seems sheer waste, on such an evening, to spend an hour more in the house than one can help."

"So it does, James. I congratulate you on your good taste. Take care! the door is only half open."

"All right. I am quite an adept now, in the way of doors. Bring a cloak, Gabrielle.—Oh!"—as they emerged into the outer world—"how sweet the air is! hay and jasmine mingled. What are the stars like?"

"Only two or three are to be seen, as yet. The sunset is hardly over; a few streaks—crimson and purple in a lake of pale green—are left still. Shall we sit down here, James?"

"Yes; and I vote that we don't move till we are obliged; so make yourself comfortable. Here—lean against me." He drew her to his side, as he spoke; not with the vehement clasp of old, but with the tenderness—calm though deep—of settled, unchangeable love. And Gabrielle nestled up to him as a little bird nestles under the wing of its mother; as a child, in perfect confidence, resigns itself to the haven of its father's arms.

"So Cissy is very happy with her baby?"

"Oh, yes. And, James, you should see the pride of Charlie in his son and heir! Dear Charlie—he deserves to be happy, doesn't he?"

"He does indeed. And Olivia? We shall get her here, I hope?"

"I extorted a promise of at least a fortnight. You can't think, James, how bright and cheerful she looks; and she is so comfortable at Enderby. Phillip and Annie, she says, and the children, declare that they could never get on now without her. She has her own sitting-room, in a quiet part of

the house; and, altogether, she confesses that she is happier than, in this world, she ever expected to be."

"That's pleasant to think of. And how about the child's name?"

"Cissy's child? They talk of Charles Gordon. Do you know—is it not strange?—Charlie says that he would rather have had a girl."

"Well—a girl will come, some day, no doubt."

"Yes, as I tell Cissy, I am looking forward to six children, at least, of hers, to pet—boys and girls both. By-the-by, James, as I drove to Meddiscombe—in that very narrow lane—I heard a clatter of wheels, and a clatter of voices; so I pulled the ponies almost into the ditch; and what do you think rushed past? A very smart wagonette, with Lord Joseph Postlethwaite and two red-headed little boys—twins, I fancy—upon the box. And, behind, looking sadly uncomfortable, poor The—so faded and pale! a fat little girl upon her lap, another at her side, and a nurse opposite, with a baby."

"What a tribe! I wonder how she likes it."

"Cissy, who knows all about her, says, not at all. She is quite overdone, and declares that her married life has been one continual worry, and press of 'brats.' Lord Joseph, who is as obstinate as obstinate can be—"

("Like most foo—men of his genus.")

"insists on taking his children about with him, always. So The is never free."

"Well—she has brought it on herself, poor thing! I am sorry for her; but thankful—so thankful—that I escaped her. Gabrielle—" and he drew her closer—"how much I have escaped, when I deserved to escape nothing! How wonderfully, in spite of myself, I have been guided—I can call it nothing less."

"Yes," she answered gently, looking toward the stars: "I was thinking to-day—recapitulating the last few years. It seems to me that a Mind higher than our own has certainly been with us."

"Do you recollect, on our wedding-day, my prayer that God would bless you, and in you, your husband, forever?"

"Yes, I recollect; and how it seemed to sanctify my joy."

"As for me, it has sanctified my whole life. God has answered that prayer. He is answering it still. He has blessed thee, and thy husband in thee.—Yes, Gabrielle—in thee."

"Dearest, there is something else that I should like you to remember. One day, when you had accused me—as you did, sometimes—of coldness;

I told you that it was not in me to express the love as you expressed yours; but that, if ever an opportunity were given me, of bearing something of doing something, for you, you would see that the love was there. And, inwardly, I prayed that such an opportunity might come. James, it has come. You do not think me cold, now?"

"I think that your warmth was the warmth of heaven, my darling—and mine, the warmth of earth."

"Oh, James!—but I won't try to answer you. One thing more: you know how heavy a trial I felt it, once, to have no children? Well! since your blindness, I have almost been glad of it. If we had children, I should be obliged to devote a good deal of time and thought to them; as it is, I am free to devote all to you—to

... 'Serve you, live for you,
Yours and yours only be.'

Yes, James—I can look up and thank God for withholding from me every thing—every thing earthly—that might divide my heart with you; that might prevent my spending my whole life, and every power in my life, under Him, for you alone."

"Gabrielle, my child, when you talk so, I can hardly bear it—or myself."

"How do you mean, James?"

"All the time, I think: 'What am I, that I should hold a being so unselfish, so pure, so devoted, to my heart—mine—and call her my wife?'"

As he spoke, he relaxed his clasp; but she only crept the closer—close as she well could—to that same heart which, unworthy as it deemed itself, was yet her highest earthly glory.

"James, don't—" she whispered—"don't fancy all that of me; it is not true. We have both much to learn, far to climb; we will help one another, bear with one another—as God helps and bears with us: and so rise together."

He stooped, and kissed her reverently. After a pause—in a low, rather dreamy voice, as though that last speech had roused some inward reminiscence—he said:

"Gabrielle, a few hours ago, as I sat alone, the past arose before me; and this is what I saw."

"I saw a young boy, just awaking to a consciousness of his own powers; to a conviction that they were no common powers; and that his path in life must be no common path—but one far above the common."

"I saw him, led by that ambition, become, by degrees, a proud, apparently a stoical, philoso-

er: isolating himself in spirit, and resolving at to himself alone should be the glory of the ccess which he regarded as certain.

"I saw him, thus inflamed by the fire of self-ship, choose his own way, and pursue it: de-ising every external aid, whether of God or of, n. I saw him, guided solely by the light in own breast, erect a standard, and press toward never asking if it were a true standard, or a se one—because, so to ask, would be to confess at he was not, as he had resolved to be, in all ings sufficient to himself.

"And then I saw—oh, Gabrielle—the mercy God!—I saw an angel appear in his way; a essenger from heaven:—who, before he was ware, took his hand, and held it so fast, that he ould not withdraw it. Fair, and sweet, and pure, at little messenger was: but, because the path which she would lead him, was not the path at he himself had chosen; because it was a ath in which other men, common men, were ing; above all, because—she holding his hand— was no longer independent: therefore he re- mted, he rebelled, he struggled to get free.

"I saw that, in these struggles, this rebellion, ae, that tender little guide of his, was often ounded—hurt and bruised. He did not con- der—perhaps he did not care—how, so his own roud will were gratified, she whom God had sent him suffered. Regardless of her entreaties, of er wistful eyes, of her clinging hand, he wrestled ntinually; but he could not unloose the clasp. ill, in spite of himself, she drew him on; still, at—fast—she held him.

"Suddenly her wings fluttered, and he thought at she was about to spread them, to fly away. nd then he saw that she was bleeding; that he ad wounded her: her—so sweet, so patient. In e same moment came upon him an agony of rmorse, and he thought: 'Better even that my gh aims should perish than that she should ffer thus! I will resign myself; I will struggle ore, since struggling gives her pain.'

"Then—even at that instant—the scales fell m his eyes, and he saw all things anew. He t that the path where she would guide him led ights more sublime than any to which his ath led. That—whereas he had considered ark of greatness to rise alone—God, from n he proceeded, has decreed that only n with his fellows—in helping and in being d—can man rise. That to despise the nat- ections implanted within us is to despise, as ere, a ladder by which we might climb from natural to the supernatural, from the human

to the divine. That, since in ourselves alone lies no power to help ourselves, our truest wisdom consists, not in scorning, but in using, all things—small as well as great things—which might tend to raise that ladder nearer to the region of perfect light. Chiefly—since, when all this is done, man, even at his best, is still so impotent, so short-sighted—that he who truly wishes to know the truth will commit himself, as a little child, to God, to be taught and guided.

"Moreover, that, while intellect is a grand thing, and morality a grand thing, love is grander than either; because, without love, morality is cold and intellect is weak; because love supplies all deficiencies, reconciles all differences, unites the high and the low, the strong and the feeble, the rich and the poor, mentally and physically, into one glorious fellowship; because, although intellect and morality are, equally with love, God's offspring, love is more than His offspring—it is His nature; for we are told that 'God is Love.'

"All this, Gabrielle, he saw—that man; and do you know how it was that he saw it?—how it was that the scales had fallen, as I told you, from his eyes? It was through her—his little angel messenger; because she, leading him, had brought him, notwithstanding his rebellion, into a purer atmosphere, which had dissolved those scales, and had restored—I might say, given, for I doubt if he ever had it before—his sight.

"Gabrielle, can you guess who that man is—and who is his little messenger?"

"Dearest, dearest James, I always hoped, I always believed, that your mistakes would give way at last. And oh, if what you say about me is true—if any of it is true—how can I ever be thankful enough? how can I prove my gratitude? Life is too short."

"Yes, indeed. But not eternity, my child."

"No—not eternity." Then she paused; and presently James caught a little sigh.

"What is it?" he said, bending lower.

"Oh, James—the old dread that comes so often! We must part some time, you and I. One of us must one day die—and the other be left."

"Perhaps not for long, my own. God is so merciful."

"Yes, that is my comfort. He may let us grow old together, and die together, or with only a few days between, like that 'James and Cicely his wife,' in the east window. Whenever I see that window, I pray it."

"And in heaven," said James, half dreamily,

"it is my firm belief, we shall be one, my Gabrielle and I, forever."

"To go on rising, higher and higher, forever. Oh, when I think of that, James, I feel myself strong for pain, for death, for any thing—however terrible—which might come before."

"Besides, we may be certain that what comes will turn to good at last."

"Yes," said Gabrielle, softly. And in heart she added:

"We know that ALL things work together good to them that love God!"

THE END.

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